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Krassnoff

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# THE UNFORGIVEN

# THE UNFORGIVEN

*By*

GENERAL P. N. KRASSNOFF

*Translated from the Russian by*
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*With an Introduction by*
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*By the same author*

FROM DOUBLE EAGLE TO RED FLAG

## *EDITOR'S PREFACE*

*"Une révolution est toujours, quoi qu'on en dise, un des plus grands malheurs dont la colère divine puisse affliger une nation. C'est le fléau de la génération qui la fait, et pendant des longues années, un siècle même, c'est le malheur de tous, le bonheur de quelques individus.*

*On ne fait ni arrête une revolution: ce qui est possible, c'est qu'un ou plusieurs de ses enfants la dirige á force de victoires, ou que ses ennemis la compriment momentanénent par la force des armes; mais, en ce cas, le feu révolutionnaire couve sous la cendre, et tôt ou tard, l'incendie se rallume avec une nouvelle force et dévore toutes les entraves."*

*—NAPOLEON.*

THESE are the words of the spoiled child of a revolution—a revolution that was the fiery steed of his own incredible career. They are such simple words that they will bear translation into simple English and may serve as an ultimate commentary on this book in its historical aspect. For "The Unforgiven" is history as well as novel.

"When all is said," Napoleon writes, "a revolution is one of the greatest evils with which the wrath of God can afflict a nation. It is the scourge of the generation

which brings it forth, and through long years—a century even—it is the misfortune of all, the good fortune of a few individuals.

"Nobody makes a revolution—or stops it: all that can be done is that one or several of its children may direct it by the force of victories, or that its enemies may suppress it for the moment by force of arms; but, in the latter case, the revolutionary fire hatches in its ashes, and, sooner or later, the blaze flames up again with new power and devours all obstacles."

The essential difference between Napoleon's point of view and that of the writer of this book is that one speaks as the master of a revolution, the other as a victim. But there is also a fundamental difference between the French and the Russian peoples which affects the verdict.

Vehemently an accomplished Muscovite—a polished gentleman and scholar, sometime Director of the Imperial Theatre in Moscow—interrupted a rash American who carelessly included the Russians among "Europeans."

"We are not Europeans," he said. "We are Asiatics."

M. Vladimir de Nélidoff's accents were accents of pride. He is a slight, mild-mannered blue-eyed man, the son of a former Imperial Russian Ambassador to Paris, and enjoys, of course, the advantage of an education elaborately European. Many of the Russians of the Old Régime do. Yet M. de Nélidoff went only one step further than General Krassnoff in this

book. General Krassnoff uses the word "Eurasians" more than once to put the Russians in their proper ethnological place.

The author of *From the Double Eagle to the Red Flag* has already painted an epic canvas of his people in the period from Rasputin and the Czarina to Lenin and the Cheka. The General was a gallant and distinguished officer in the Imperial service and certainly is not without prejudice against the Reds and their doctrines. But he knows his Russia and his Russians, high and low. In this moving story, flung against the background of the bloody welter of the Revolution and the futile counter-revolutionary attempts,—a story multitudinously peopled and shifting back and forth kaleidoscopically after the Russian fashion,—it seems to me that he has achieved something even more illuminating to us of the West than his larger and earlier work provided. And that is saying much, for the earlier work shed a flood of light in our darkness.

Let me merely suggest a few pictures from the newer story. Now, you are stifling in the tenements of Moscow where aristocrats harbor in grinding poverty and unspeakable filth among the dregs of the population and creep out stealthily to seek food, while the scum rides armed in motors, and manners and morals melt into a morass of shameless license and calculated bestiality. Now, you smell the free air and the peat smoke of the steppes, hear the swift beat of hoofs and the troika bells, and linger a while amid the hearty hospitalities of a green-shuttered country-

house of the gentry, holding precariously on to the old country ways, on the brink of rape and ruin. Youthful gaieties and graces and the old romance are not yet extinguished. There is lavish good cheer, uniforms of hussars give color, lovemaking goes on in gardens beside the clear mirror of a pool.

Now, you ride hard to the fighting-front southward, where White Russian and Red Russian meet on the stricken field, where there is singing, looting, murder and mutiny; where war forces practical communism upon the most implacable enemy of the Soviets; where plunging British tanks and galloping Cossacks face the grey masses of Trotzky's loutish soldiers commanded by the Czar's ex-generals. Poor devils, they are hoping against hope that Russia is still their Russia, only temporarily gone mad—to each general his hell-hound Commissar, inseparable, spying ceaselessly. Now, you are on the shores of the Black Sea and look on at the wreck of Denikin's army crowding aboard the Allied ships, while behind them tragedy stalks the streets and plays with light loves—because tomorrow means death. Now, you are in the torture chamber, the unspared witness of horrors that freeze the blood and stagger the imagination of evil, yet carry conviction of the truth faithfully reported. Another turn, and you are back in those noisome tenements again, amid the scrimping and contriving and conniving of desperate women, hopeless men and young people gone wild—hunters in their new jungles. And so on—back and forth—as fortune deals with the crowded miscellany

of the book's company, young and old, male and female, White, Red and Green. For there are Greens, also,—pure bandits.

The earlier novel was bigger, but war and the soldier, as such, usurped a great share of attention. Essentially it was the epic of an Imperial Guards officer, from his maiden adventure with a lady of the chorus to the grisly martyrdom which was his public destiny and his private Nemesis. This one gives an even more poignant picture of the Russian people with all their sickening vices, simple virtues, childish weaknesses, interminable chatter and exotic magnificences. Its field is more national. It digs deeper. The story centres around the pathetic figure of a Czarist general —a simple soldier, trying for his family's sake, in peril of outrage and death, and for distracted Russia's sake, to serve with the Reds. It includes sons, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, not omitting the people's Commissars and the people's Commissars' mistresses—influential persons. It deals, with the same relentless realism, but more philosophically, with the period of dissolution of an entire civilization—a period which tried men's souls not less cruelly than it tortured their bodies.

In the original General Krassnoff calls the book "To Understand Is to Forgive." It sounds a clumsy title. But, in fact, the narrative does bring to Western eyes a vision—it establishes an understanding which robs condemnation of its sting because it so largely replaces indignation with pity. Pity for this people—

peasant and prince alike—and princes were so many in Russia! But not pity for the engineers of destruction, though the destruction they let loose was the harvest of sin too long endured. General Krassnoff himself admits that Imperial Russia was over-ripe for ruin in the sight of men and High Heaven. He admits it even while he makes a holy religion of looking forward to a new Russia of the Czars and the Orthodox Church—a Russia of the Czars and the Church restored after purging by Revolution—saved by the Soviets not the less truly if it is freely granted that the Soviets are worse than what went before.

It is a hard saying—mystical, paradoxical, oriental —Biblical.

You may understand it,—understand the strange mixture of savagery, almost womanish tenderness and mystic exaltation in the Russian,—only by remembering that he is in fact an Asiatic, with, at best, no more than an overlay of Western civilization. "Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar" is an old saying. The world was by way of being taught to forget it—to ignore the truth of it—as Peter the Great's empire played its part in the European Concert and even adopted the public role of peacemaker among the nations. Here—in this story—the Russian is laid bare to us who are so far West that Europe's Nearest East is a double mystery. Krassnoff has stripped the Russian naked, not for shame, but for pity—and pride—and understanding.

H. I. Brock.

# THE UNFORGIVEN

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## PART ONE

### I.

1918—a year of dread and terror!

It was five o'clock in the morning when Fedor Michailovitch woke up. He usually woke up at that time. All was quiet in the little room with its two plain beds against the wall and the faint outline of a window with drawn curtains dimly visible at the farther end. His wife, Natasha, was fast asleep still, and he did not even hear her breathe. At that hour the distant roar and rumble of troubled and harassed Moscow used to die down, and dead silence reigned outside. Only from time to time a lump of snow fell with a soft thud from the roof into the courtyard down below, and the sound, undisturbed by any other noise, lingered long in his ears, while a host of thoughts, unconnected and queer, chased each other through his mind.

Fedor Michailovitch's mind toiled hard in those early hours. It was as though two separate beings were arguing within him, one asking questions, to which the other gave wise and ruthless answers. There could be no thought of sleep once they had

started wrangling. Nothing availed,—neither the Lord's prayer said three times, nor endless counting, —the two opponents kept on arguing, and yet the problems remained unsolved.

How had it come about, that he, a general commanding the 1st Brigade of the 39th Infantry Division, was now living in his sister's flat in Moscow,—on the sixth floor of an enormous building on the Arbat,— on an illegal footing and wearing his brother-in-law's clothes? Why was he hiding in this house inhabited by poor officials, feeling miserable and at a loss what to do?

When had this absurd situation begun, which neither he nor Natasha could understand?

It had begun when he had left the front for St. Petersburg, where his daughter Lisa lay sick with typhoid fever, and had learned that a revolution had broken out in the capital.

"No," someone said within him, "it began much before that. Do you remember one day, many years ago, when your sister Lipotchka came to visit you with her husband, Benedict Benedictovitch Lissenko? You had just finished the Military Academy and were serving in the Staff of the St. Petersburg Circuit, living with your family on the 2d Rojdestvenskaia on the Peski.* It was just after the Russo-Japanese War. Lissenko was an official at the Chief Post Office. They had stayed to dinner with you and after dinner Lis-

*The "Peski"—literally "The Sands"—one of the poorer and less fashionable quarters of St. Petersburg.

senko, Lipotchka, Natasha and you had shut yourself up from the children in your bedroom. Lissenko mysteriously informed you that the Post and Telegraph functionaries had decided to form a professional union and revindicate their rights, entering upon a struggle with the Government for the amelioration of their material welfare.

"We have worked for them enough, eating black bread and drinking water. We have stuck long enough in that hole of Djarkent, bringing children into the world. Now we want money and freedom, an eight hours' labour-day and guarantees for our old age, otherwise there will be a strike . . ." Benedict Benedictovitch said. He looked pale and agitated.

Lipotchka was sitting on her brother's bed and her sickly greenish face and large tired eyes wore a troubled and pitiful expression.

"Dika," she exclaimed, "what have you been hatching there? You are revolting against your superiors! And where shall we go with our five children if you are sacked?"

"Benedict," said Fedor Michailovitch, "no good can come of what you are scheming. And what about your duty? Have you quite forgotten that?"

With a viciousness all the more surprising that they had never observed it in him before, Lissenko cried out: "Duty! To hell with duty! We are in duty bound to decipher their silly addresses and rot in Djarkent and suchlike holes, stamp letters and make up parcels every blessed day of our lives! And what

is their duty, pray? Hanging about restaurants and listening to music! Why don't you laugh? Isn't it amusing?"

"But somebody HAS to sit in Djarkent, somebody HAS to decipher addresses, or else life will stand still, and the country will go to the dogs."

"Let it! A nice country, to be sure! What about freedom, what about elbow-room?"

"Shame, Benedict, shame," exclaimed Natasha, "there is nothing better, nothing more beautiful on earth than our country. How I long for Djarkent, our orchard, and our dear apple trees, and the mountains far away! What is to become of Djarkent, if things are as you wish them to be?"

"It shall be returned to the Tarantchees and Kirghises! Nationalities shall not be oppressed! It is absurd! All Russia is. As big as a mountain, with no more brains than a pin-head!"

"He has gone off his own head, one cannot reason with him," said Fedor Michailovitch.

..... Then came the strike. No light, no trams, water had to be fetched from the Neva—the waterworks having shut down. Lissenko did not go to his office, he stayed at home and walked aimlessly from room to room not knowing what to do with himself. He smoked a great deal, looked as black as a cloud and would say, spitting frequently: "We shall get what we want. No matter,—we shall get what we want!"

Meantime the work at the Post Office was done by girls, students of the Lyceum and Law School, and by officers. One could smell perfume everywhere, innocent flirting was going on, a happy muddle reigned in the distribution of letters; postal matters were sent off in wrong directions, and—in the end—the "tchinovniki" did get what they wanted. Their salaries were raised. But it came too late to make people content. A festering canker had opened in the State's organism. Prices went up. Shipments of goods became unreliable. Labour unions raised their rates, and the output went down. Here and there all over the country strikes occurred. Raids, robberies and pogroms became things of daily occurrence.

"That is how it began!" thought Fedor Michailovitch, turning carefully in bed in order not to wake Natasha. "How is it that I did not notice all this when it was going on? It was like some disease, like typhoid fever, when the temperature keeps rising. What a difference in everything, life itself moves at a different pace. Even my darling sister, Lipotchka, usually kindness itself, even she, all but quarrelled with Natasha.

"Natasha," she said, "it is all because you have been brought up in a privileged school. You do not understand. Dika is right in his way. Everybody must think of himself only and must ensure his own happiness without troubling about others. What the Gospel teaches is quite all right in theory, but sound socialism protects those who toil from those who exploit them

for their own ends. Even your husband, although he is my brother, is guarding State, and not social, interests, and thus is working against us. He also is a henchman in a certain way."

"You ought to be ashamed to talk like this," meekly retorted Natasha. "You know very well that our life has been full of hardships and privations. You saw with your own eyes how we were struggling along in Djarkent and later, at the Academy. To work harder than Fedia has been working all his life is impossible!"

"You are quite right. But for all that, didn't you get Svietik into a Cadet School with a State scholarship, and aren't you going to get the same for Igor? And I, what shall I do with my five children, if Dika does not fight for their rights? It is clear, we cannot win rights unless we fight. We must unite against you, sally forth and win."

"Against whom?" asked Natasha.

"You—the officers, the State," cried out Lipotchka, waving her hands frantically.

"Now, now, Lipotchka," said Fedor Michailovitch, looking up from a paper he was reading. "Shall brother fight brother? What for?"

"The truth!"

"Don't you remember what our old nurse Kloosha used to say:—that the Truth was with God?"

"Bother nurse Kloosha!" shouted Lipotchka, walking up and down Natasha's room with long strides, as was her wont? "And mother? Our dear mother! Was it not poverty that brought her to the grave? O

God! It makes me shudder when I think of our childhood. That miserable flat of ours in the Ivanovskaya, that cheerless cramming of lessons without end, constantly living in fear of examinations! Even now, when I happen to have a nightmare it has always something to do with exams in geometry. And can you tell me please of what use geometry has been to us in our life? No, no more of it! We are going to build up a better and happier life! Fedia, can you imagine that we never have been able to read anything with Dika? He has always been too busy with his work. But now he is free in the evenings. We are to win the right to live!"

Well, they had won it!

About that time Hippolytus returned from exile with his wife Aglaia and his son Tom. He affected to wear his beard like Dostoievsky. He gave himself lofty airs and treated his youngest brother, Fedor Michailovitch, with condescension. At once, in the presence of Natasha, Lipotchka and the children, he had declared that he and Aglaia were living together out of holy wedlock, for he did not recognise the authority of the church. He had asked that Aglaia be called Azalea and his son—who, of course, had not been baptised—Tom. The boy was then eleven years old, he had never heard anything about God and had been told that churches were nothing but old picture galleries.

"And I must insist," Hippolytus had said, "that your children, Fedia, do not spoil my boy with their

prejudices. Tom is going to build up a new Russia, and in that Russia there will be no God. You understand, Fedia? All these delusions in which you believe and mother believed must be forgotten. Priests, mass, matins—all that belongs to ancient history."

Tom turned out to be a quiet, silent boy, from time to time casting timid glances on his father and mother. When the family assembled for dinner and Fedor Michailovitch's children began crossing themselves while Natasha was saying grace, Aglaia, alias Azalea, ostentatiously sat down and said in a loud voice:

"Look away, Tom, don't listen! Look indignant, Tom!"

"Yes, that is how it began," thought Fedor Michailovitch, looking into space with wide open eyes. When the socialists came with their queer teachings, when truth in art began to be held for nothing, when Vrubl was proclaimed a genius and Blok started his puzzling poetry. When poisonous negation of everything found its way into the soul of the people. Or wasn't it even before that? Had it not begun already when we, boys at school, used to discuss all this.

"Are you asleep?" said Natasha's caressing voice.

"No."

"Why don't you sleep?"

"I can't. My thoughts will not let me."

"Don't think so much, darling. What have you found out by it?"

"Nothing, of course. I am all in a muddle. I try

to think how all this began, who is to blame for it, and I cannot for the life of me find a way out."

"Yes, it is the same with me. What time is it?"

"Twenty past five."

"Oh, try to sleep a little more. We must sleep. It makes one forget."

"I'll try."

All was quiet again for about half an hour. A clock in the next room struck six.

"What do you think, Fedia,—have Svietik and Oleg and Lisa managed to get to the Don?"

"I hope so."

"And you think Igor is with the Ojoguins?"

"Most likely."

"I wish there were at least a letter."

"Let us ask Tom to find out."

"Yes, we must ask him, there is no one else. How good he is," said Natasha with a sigh, "do you know, Fedia, I believe he will become a priest. Though never baptised, how wonderful he has turned out!"

"Sleep, my dear Natasha, you need all your strength for tomorrow, it is your turn to stand in the queue for our sugar rations."

"*You* must sleep."

Neither of them did.

## II.

Lipotchka had seen her husband off to his office. It was nine o'clock and she was setting the table for the family's breakfast-tea in the dining room which was also used as a bedroom for Benedict Benedictovitch. Everything looked untidy, because the bedclothes had not been removed from the couch on which he slept. Thick clouds of steam rose from the boiling samovar to the ceiling. A few slices of greyish bread lay on a tray.

Fedor Michailovitch and Natasha came in. He wore a soldier's tunic of khaki without shoulder straps, trousers of the same colour and top-boots. Tall and well built, with hair turning a silvery gray, an energetic face, deeply tanned, clean shaven but for an old-fashioned moustache, he looked the picture of a soldier. He might have been taken for a colonel or a general; by no means for a workman or a proletarian. Natasha, in her worn dark blue Chinese kimono, threaded with gold, looked wonderfully young, fresh and handsome for all her forty-five years. She kissed her sister-in-law tenderly.

"I sometimes get cross with you, Natasha," said Lipotchka, "and I don't understand you, but as soon as

I see you, I cannot resist your charm. Just look at her, Fedia,—she has given you four children and brought them up and she does not look a bit older than when she was skipping around like a young goat in Djarkent at nineteen. You must get it from the Siberian steppes, this vitality of yours, Natasha."

"Touch wood, Lipotchka," said Fedor Michailovitch, "you will bring bad luck to my Natalotchka."

"And how fond you are of each other! I dare say she has never once been unfaithful to you, Fedia!"

"Stop talking nonsense, Lipotchka. What is wrong with you and Benedict Benedictovitch? As though you were not an ideal couple."

"Well, Fedia, we cannot complain much about each other, but we can never be compared to you. And besides,—who would care for me even if I did want to be unfaithful to him?"

"But why do you say you are sometimes cross with me?" asked Natasha.

"Because you and Fedia are always riding the high horse. You do not and you will not give in to the authority of the Soviets. From the way you act one might fancy that the two of you feel yourselves chosen to wreck their work! And what do you hope to get for your pains? This very morning, when I was sending Katia to market to try and get some food, do you know what she said to me? 'Olympiada Michailovna,' she said, 'I am going to report that you are hiding your brother, a general. If he is a general, he must submit to the authority of the peasants and serve

with the people. Else, what is he good for?' There, you see, Natasha, I am afraid Fedia might get into trouble."

"And what would you advise me to do?" asked Fedor Michailovitch, frowning and stirring his tea.

Lipotchka, pale and thin, with dark rings under her big eyes, wearing an old faded cotton dress, sat before the samovar looking out of the curtainless window, on the panes of which the February frost had traced a delicate pattern. It was lit up by the yellow rays of the sun, and one could see through the glass a piece of snow-covered roof and a chimney sending forth clouds of white smoke which were caught up by the wind and scattered all over the pale blue sky.

"Well, Fedia, whoever holds power—holds it by the grace of God. We are not such millionaires as to let everything go hang and live without work. We have been working all our lives, why shouldn't we work now? In all the streets are posters stuck up calling the men to enlist in the Red Army of the Workmen and Peasants, and officers are invited to register. General Startzeff is in charge of the enrolling office of our district. Why not go there? You would feel better, and we should also be more at ease."

Lipotchka spoke, and a heavy silence reigned in the room.

When Fedor Michailovitch found words at last, it was in a husky, strangled voice, unlike his own:

"What do they want it for, this Red Army of theirs?"

"To defend the Revolution."

"The Revolution, . . . do you understand, Lipotchka, what you are saying? Do you? It is not Russia they want to defend. No. They delivered Russia, at Brest-Litovitch into the hands of the Germans, to be looted and sacked; they are in the pay of Germany, German spies, hirelings of the Kaiser, and they want me to serve them! No, Lipotchka, you are talking about things you do not understand!"

"Maybe, Fedia—if there were anything else! If the Emperor were not in exile! You will see, they may yet bring the Emperor back from Tobolsk. The Germans are all-powerful. Kaiser Wilhelm will not stand for their keeping his kinsman in prison. Who can tell who the Bolsheviks are? Who is Lenin? Who is Trotzky? They are human beings after all! Look at the masses of people who follow them; who believe in them!"

"Who can tell? I can!" exclaimed Fedor Michailovitch, striking the table with his fist. "I know one thing. They have destroyed the army and they will never create another. The government is full of aliens, and aliens have no use for Russia! And you ask me to go and help them to ruin my country! We are not yet reduced to such straits as that! I'll go to the Cossacks, to Kaledin, to Doutoff. I have heard that the army on the Rumanian front is still intact. I'll go to General Shtcherbatcheff. The rumour goes that somewhere in the south General Korniloff has appeared.

It is impossible that all Russia should meekly give in and not say a word!"

"And what about her? Are you going to leave her alone?" said Lipotchka pointing with her eyes at Natasha.

"Her?"

"Yes,—her! And your children! Can you say for certain where your sons are at this moment? Do you know that they are not even now in the Red Army?"

"Lipotchka, why do you talk like this? Do you want to get rid of me and of my wife, because I am a general of the Czar, or have you other reasons?"

"I say this because I see no other way out. You know very well that the union of postal and telegraph clerks also began by being against them. Yet they have recognised their authority in the end. Isn't it absurd, Fedia? Your soldiers are on their side, and what are you without your soldiers? A nice general, to be sure!"

"My soldiers! They have been dead and buried a long time, my brave Turkestan riflemen! And those who came after them—can they be called soldiers? I was abused by them and beaten—and now you want me to serve them! No use talking about it any longer, Lipotchka, I shall not serve under the Red flag!"

"That remains to be seen. Necessity will make you."

"Lipotchka, speak out. . . . Don't beat about the bush! We are a burden to you? Aren't we?"

"Not at all! No burden whatever, but I wish you

would understand, Fedia. Katia is becoming more and more impertinent every day. Sergueieff, who lives in the ground-floor flat wants to know how you should be registered—he has been elected chairman of the house-committee. He is a decent old man, and has promised not to mention you at all for the present, but that cannot go on so for ever!"

"Very well. We are going away."

"How unreasonable you are, Fedia! As though I wanted to send you away. All I meant to say was that we must find some way to arrange matters."

"I have already found it—we are going away."

"But where on earth can you go to without money?"

"Oh—anywhere!"

"Don't be angry, Fedia. You must understand—and forgive me."

"I am not angry, Lipotchka. And I have nothing to forgive. I understand perfectly. You are quite right, I cannot go on living like that—I must do something."

Fedor Michailovitch had not touched his tea. He was walking up and down the room with a flushed face.

"Well," he said at last, "let me leave Natasha with you for the time being, while I go reconnoitring!"

"Where do you want to go?"

"I'll go—to see Tom."

"You are right, go to Tom. Only, Fedia, don't be angry with me. And, for heaven's sake don't imagine that Dika has anything to do with what I said. It is

only me, because I am such a coward and constantly in fear for you, for everybody."

"I am not angry. I understand. I am a leper, a white crow in a swarm of red ones!"

## III.

Fedor Michailovitch went out towards evening when it was getting dark. It somehow seemed safer in the dark. At that time of the day Moscow, which in daylight resembled a turbulent stream that had broken its bounds, would subside and calm down; there were not so many lorries filled with armed men rushing about and there was more chance of passing unrecognised. It was a long way to go—Tom lived somewhere in the suburbs. Lipotchka had given him Tom's address and he had traced on the map the road which would lead him to his destination.

The frosty air was bracing and the snow was creaking under his feet as he walked along with measured steps, his eyes fixed on the ground—thinking. When he reached the Arbat—one of the chief arteries of Moscow—he thought he heard someone following, even keeping step with him. It was a heavy, firm, regular footfall. Fedor Michailovitch stopped and the man behind him stopped likewise. He could hear him breathe. An unaccountable fear began to steal into Fedor Michailovitch's heart. A peculiar taste came into his mouth and his lips felt dry, but he tried to reason back his self-control. "Nonsense," he told himself, "there is absolutely nothing to be afraid of, he

is alone—and I, with my revolver, can be more than a match for him."

He quickened his pace. The man behind him followed suit. At last Fedor Michailovitch stopped under a street-lamp and waited. The form of a soldier emerged from the darkness. A crumpled cap pushed far back on the head, a forelock sticking out from under the peak and hanging low down on the forehead, a sullen face with small eyes, like those of a pig, with white eyelashes—such were the chief features of the picture. That gaping mouth with its dry, unwashed lips and clipped moustache revealed unkept and irregular teeth. Topcoat thrown negligently over one shoulder, and munition-belt sagging down below his hips, stamped the man for what he was, a specimen of the familiar type of "comrade soldier" of the revolution. The man stopped before Fedor Michailovitch, stood there for a moment or two, and then went on. At the next lamp-post he stood still again.

Fedor Michailovitch looked round. He was in a narrow lane close to an old-fashioned railing overhung by the delicate branches of birch trees. Behind the railing was a church, built in the time of Ivan III, or even earlier. Small and weather-beaten, and yet looking important, it seemed to have gained in girth what it had lost in height in its surrounding of tall modern buildings. It looked as if it had sunk into the ground and expanded at the base like a patted down baker's loaf. In the yard Fedor Michailovitch could distinguish here and there under the birch trees venerable

tombs. He suddenly remembered the name of the church, mentioned by Lipotchka. It was a queer old name—a little irreverent and yet pathetic, in its artless simplicity. Lipotchka had called it "St. Nicholas-on-chicken-legs" or something like that.

The narrow lane could be seen curving away into the distance lit up by a double row of street-lamps, but all was dark round the church. The trees, bare and lifeless, stuck out of the fluffy snow and looked, on the background of the surrounding houses, like property trees. A yellowish light shone dimly through the lattice work of the tall barred windows.

Fedor Michailovitch decided to seek refuge in the shelter of the church. He passed through the gate and followed the path of worn old flagstones which led to the portal. The massive, heavily studded door was open. He entered, and passing through a second door made of iron, and a third, a wooden one, he descended two steps and found himself enveloped in the dim half-light of the church. The air was heavy with the smell of burning wax and incense, mingled with the peculiar odor of decay which goes with ancient places of worship,—of ancient vestments, mouldering velvet hangings on the church lamps, the centuries' accumulated dust. There were very few people in the church. They were all still out in the streets, walking about drunk with power and too busy with "deepening the revolution" as the current phrase went.

In those days of rapturous emotions, red flags and processions, the church had become ridiculous, paltry,

and of no use to anybody. It was only good for old men and old women.

This was the first Monday in Lent and an evening service was going on. Fedor Michailovitch had been brought up by his mother, a very religious woman; at school had been a choir-boy; he knew the service by heart. Every word called forth in him dear memories of his far-off childhood and youth.

*O Lord and Ruler of our lives! Save us from the spirit of sloth and despair and lust of power and idle talk!*

At the first words of the familiar prayer all knelt down and bowed their heads to the ground. For a few moments silence reigned in the church, interrupted only by deep sighs, the occasional sound of a boot scraping against the stone floor. Then all rose again with a momentary shuffling of feet, and the priest went on.

Fedor Michailovitch alone had not knelt down. He stood in a dark corner close to the window; and thoughts, like those which came when he lay awake in the morning, chased each other through his mind, round that same problem: "How did it all happen?"

"The spirit of sloth," thought Fedor Michailovitch, "the spirit of sloth! Ever since the 28th of February —for a whole year—all Russia has been smitten, as if by magic or some evil genius, with that spirit of sloth. Nobody wants to do anything. How many are in the clutches of black despair and how many others are

trying over and over again to quench their thirst for power, in the idle talk at endless meetings, congresses and committees! But how did it happen, and when, when did I also give way to this devastating "spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk" that we call 'revolution'?"

A picture came vividly to his mind. His youngest daughter, Lisa, had fallen seriously ill last year in February, and Natasha had recalled him from the front. There was a lull in their sector, and his brigade was resting. He had just taken charge of it coming from the Caucasus, and he easily got a fortnight's leave. Natasha and their daughter were living in Petersburg in the Offitzerskaia street. A vague restlessness had taken hold of the capital. A mutiny had broken out among the troops.

Fedor Michailovitch clenched his fists at the sight of the idle groups of unarmed soldiers in the streets and thought: "I wish I had my brigade here to clear away all this rabble!" It never for a moment entered his head that what he saw might be more than a passing disaffection, that he was witnessing the beginning of the greatest upheaval in Russian history, in fact,—that what he saw was the fall of Great Russia. All he knew was that they were on the eve of a great offensive and were preparing to fight the last decisive battle of the war, and that at such a time a riff-raff of dirty cads in the rear and the "socialists"—Fedor Michailovitch did not discriminate between parties, and to him anybody who went against his sovereign and

country was a socialist—had banded together against the Emperor and were creating disturbances in the capital. To him it was rank treason. All that those people deserved was to be shot.

On the 28th of February he had gone out on some business. He saw a body of sailors swinging along the Moika in perfect formation. They were the Marine Guards, the pride of the Russian army and navy, and, as Fedor Michailovitch knew, recruited from among the best, the most manly-looking and smartest men from the whole of Russia.

"There, at last!" he thought with relief, "are men who will remain faithful to their duty and their oath of allegiance! No doubt they are on their way to send these rebels of the Duma about their business, to put these scoundrels under arrest and restore order!"

He hurried on to have a closer view.

What he saw made his heart stand still. A large red flag was fluttering above the heads of the marching soldiers. The emblem of mutiny and infamous treason was openly displayed by these sailors, who were "the pride of the Russian Army and Fleet."

Everything else was blotted out of his mind. He scarcely saw where he was going, and could not have said how he reached home again.

Topy, the shaggy grey cat which Natasha had brought with her from Turkestan, met him in the hall with his tail standing up like a panache, and walking to and fro rubbed himself, purring loudly, against his legs.

"Look, Fedia, Topy remembers you quite well," said Natasha. "But . . . what is the matter with you? What has happened?" she exclaimed.

"Nothing. Leave me alone for a while. Let me collect my thoughts. All is lost. . . Or am I losing my wits?"

He went to his study: a small, narrow room with a large writing desk occupying the whole of one wall, a book-case full of books and an old leather couch. He threw himself, face downwards, on the couch, burying his head in a silk cushion. A feeling of numbness crept over his limbs, while his thoughts strayed at random.

"Has all this really got to be as it is? Can it really be that these awful things which people tell each other and which are openly discussed in the papers, are true? Can it really be that Miliukoff, Purishkievitch, Gutchkoff, Shulgine are right, and that the Emperor is wrong? That Russia must be saved from the Emperor and the 'court-camarilla'? Yes, . . . and the Marine Guards. . ."

So he lay until dark. Late in the evening, he joined Natasha in the dining-room. He had visibly aged, his face was drawn and thin, and the grey in his thick curly hair had become more pronounced. They drank their tea in silence. Natasha did not ask questions, she knew that he would tell her everything later.

Two days later, he heard that the Emperor had abdicated, and the terrible picture of the dark column

of sailors marching along the Moika was recalled to his mind.

On his return from leave he and his brigade swore allegiance to the Provisional Government, he made and listened to speeches, received all sorts of "honorable gentlemen" who had come from Petersburg and talked high-flown rubbish, and in the end got so muddled up in his head that he did not understand anything. Instead of the neat precision of military life which so far had been regulated to the minute by long-established rules and schedules, a glorious Bedlam broke loose, with murder, coaxing, looting of regimental chests, disarming officers as the order of the day; and time was fooled away parleying for days at a stretch with the newly achieved regimental committees. When spring came, these committees were the masters of the situation. One of them was presided over by a man who played the flute in the regimental band; at the head of another stood a tailor of Mosaic creed. The following summer the brigade dispersed, and the men went peaceably home.

The government endeavored to keep up a semblance of authority. Fedor Michailovitch, who had reported the dissolution of his brigade, was called to Petersburg, where he got appointed a member of some commission that never met. Later he very half-heartedly took part in General Korniloff's "plot" and, when this failed, he and Natasha went to Moscow, where he remained, doing nothing and waiting for events.

He heard about the overthrow of the Provisional

Government by the Bolsheviks. He also heard that his flat had been given as a lodging to some communist sailors who used his piano for unclean purposes, spoiled his furniture and tore his books. Only Topy, the cat, had for some reason found a warm corner in their hearts, they called him "Bourjoui," petted him and gave him plenty of food.

"The Bolsheviks," thought Fedor Michailovitch, "are the last letter of some new alphabet, the first letter of which spells 'Revolution'. We are being made to go through it. Having said A and B and C, we cannot help going on and coming to the last letter. He who embraces Revolution, he shall also embrace Bolshevism."

Fedor Michailovitch was awakened from these gnawing thoughts by the noise of the congregation kneeling down again. It had become quite dark in the church. The verger was walking noiselessly about, putting out one by one the candles before the ancient images, and the only light remaining was that of flickering oil-lamps here and there.

*And grant us the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love.*

The psalmodist began chanting the prayers of the Liturgy and the old familiar words flowed on as they had been flowing for five centuries in this church. It seemed that every one of them by re-echoing again and again from the ancient walls had hollowed out a niche of its own.

Without attracting anybody's attention Fedor Michailovitch quietly left the church.

The slovenly soldier was waiting for him. He was standing at the gate chewing sunflower seeds, nonchalantly spitting out the husks. His dull, colorless face was like a lifeless mask.

Fedor Michailovitch went on his way dodging like a hare and soon thought he had shaken the man off. But in trying to do so, he had lost his way. Night had set in; a black, cold winter night. For a long time he did not meet anybody and he felt more forlorn and fidgety in the empty streets of Moscow than if he had been alone in a wild forest. At last, he saw an old woman sitting at the gate of a house where she had been ringing the bell trying in vain to gain admittance.

She directed him on his way and about ten o'clock he reached the house where Tom lived. It was a new house, seven stories high, of the type that is built with an eye for economy and for the sake of profitable investment of capital. It towered, a solitary giant, high above the small old wooden one-storied houses amidst which it stood. Fedor Michailovitch entered the open gate when he suddenly thought he saw again, plastered against the wall, the form of the soldier who had followed him. An uneasy feeling got hold of him once more, and his legs became as heavy as lead. He did not want to look round to make sure that he had not been mistaken, but faint-heartedly tried to gain reassurance by persuading himself that his imagination had only played him a trick.

He knew from Lipotchka exactly where to find Tom. In one of the corners of the second inner courtyard was a narrow entrance door with an iron porch. Narrow flights of evil-smelling stairs led up seemingly into endless space. The landlord had, for economy's sake, taken out the electric bulbs on alternate floors, so that the landings were by turns lit up or plunged in darkness. One could hear voices coming from behind the closed doors of the flats. In one of them, on the third floor, somebody was playing a tango on the piano and young voices were laughing merrily. At last, on the seventh floor, groping in the dark, he found the wooden handle of an old-fashioned bell hanging on the left of an oil-cloth covered door. This was where Tom lived. He had scarcely pulled the handle when a bell behind the door began to swing to and fro on its spring and with a harsh jangle broke the silence of the seventh floor. Presently footsteps were heard and the door opened. In the door-way stood Tom.

"Who is it?" he asked, peering into the dark.

"It is I, Tom," answered Fedor Michailovitch, "Uncle Fedia."

"Ah, it is you, Uncle Fedia! Please come in. I am glad to see you!"

## IV.

Tom's room was not large. Close to the wall was a small writing-table. An electric bulb with a tin shade hung over it and shed its light over an open book. Beside the book was a half emptied glass of weak tea and a piece of black bread.

The book was the Gospel.

Fedor Michailovitch told Tom about the talk with Lipotchka that morning and how he had decided to ask him for shelter.

"You have done well to come here," said Tom, "Aunt Lipa is afraid of everything, and no wonder too, with her five children. You are a general, and in these troubled times anything might happen."

Fedor Michailovitch was astonished to notice how much Tom reminded him of his brother Hippolytus in his youth. Tom also wore his jet black hair rather long in front, hanging down over his left eye-brow and, with exactly the same jerky movement of the head that had been so characteristic of his father, shook it back when it got in his way. The downy moustache on his upper lip and the curly beard which covered his cheeks were like those of Fedor Michailovitch's eldest brother, Andrew, who had committed suicide

by taking poison some years before. Tom's grey eyes were like those of Fedor Michailovitch's mother, a little protruding and with an expression of infinite kindness in them. He was short-sighted and had a way of looking through half-shut eyes which had a certain soft womanly charm.

Fedor Michailovitch took off his overcoat with its shabby astrakhan collar and sat down. He looked at the book.

Tom blushed.

"You are surprised? Father and mother forbade me to read it. They said it was an awful and evil book, a tyrant's book. Well, if you care to hear about it, I'll tell you how it happened that I am reading it. . . But may I offer you some tea first?"

"With pleasure, if it does not put you to any trouble."

"None whatever. The people with whom I live are a nice old couple. They will give me everything in a minute."

Tom left the room and soon returned carrying a tea-pot, a glass and a saucer. He also brought some bread, butter and jam.

"Help yourself, Uncle . . . I am so glad . . . I am so glad to be able to do something for the sake of Christ."

"How does it happen that you of all men have turned to Christ?"

"Well, I'll tell you everything quite frankly. You know that father and mother wanted to bring me up

in the new way. Mother was anxious to prove that there was no such thing as what people call a soul, and that the only thing that really exists is the body, which perishes after death. I have not been to school at all, mother used to teach me herself. Father and mother made a special point of physiology and mathematics, and in mathematics I soon left father behind. Well, when I was about nineteen I one day had a discussion with a friend of mine who used to read this book and was so full of its merits that I became interested. Partly he persuaded me; partly I wanted to satisfy my curiosity—in short, he lent me the book and I began to read it. At first I did not understand anything, but I realised, although I could not grasp its meaning, that everything in it was told in a wonderfully simple way. I read it over again and gradually everything got clearer and clearer just as in the early morning the mist lifts under the rays of the sun: a haystack thrusts itself into view, a shock of sheaves flashes up as if made of gold, a dark mass looms in the distance gradually revealing itself as a forest, until the whole landscape is disclosed in every detail. It was exactly like that. Out of the mist of parables, comparisons, juxtapositions—you must remember, all that was new to me, I had never read anything about such things—suddenly the image of Christ began to take shape. I sometimes imagined that I saw Him before me, that I was not *reading* the Gospel, but listening to the gentle notes of somebody's voice.

"An irresistible longing to go to church got hold of

me. The first time I went there, I felt a little uneasy and ashamed. I was afraid I would be found out, that people would see at once I was not a Christian. I did not even know the right way of crossing myself. Standing in a corner, I listened attentively and tried to understand. . . I thought that all this would wear off as had so many other passions of mine in the past. Nietzsche's and Karl Marx's books had been constantly about me. I took pride in calling myself a socialist, and was preparing to become a member of the party. But now I was standing in church, trying to discover when all this had happened. When? I did not know much about history. Father did not approve of history; he thought it worse than useless. All I knew about it, I had gathered from novels I had been reading in secret.

"You see me there in that church. Matins are being celebrated. Only very few people are present. Candles are flickering before the ikons. Many-colored rays shine through the stained glass of the ikon-lamps. I hear people sighing. It seems that the town has receded somewhere far away and I cannot help thinking about the catacombs of Rome. There, in the gardens, were stakes to which they tied people and burnt them alive, while down below in the catacombs other people were praying. They believed that Christ had arisen, that there would be a new life after death. Christ was in misery—yet He would bring consolation to others. . . And then again here in Moscow,—was it not much the same in this town with its racks, execu-

tions, floggings and cruel bodyguards of a terrible czar? In their churches, small and darkened with smoke, like the one where I am standing now, people knelt before the ikons and listened to the prayers which were said by the priest as they are being said at this very moment for everybody, even for me. It brought comfort to their hearts. They forgot their woes and, escaping from terror, found heavenly bliss.

"Uncle! I did a lot of thinking in those days. I was waiting for the revolution to come. Socialism was to be triumphant then. Mother used to say that socialism was something higher than Christ, and I believed that she was right. When was it that Christ lived? Twenty centuries ago. In an age of darkness and terror, when the people were simple and uneducated. But now socialism is on the march in all its glory, and the greatest minds are on its side. Father and mother were waiting for the revolution as for the advent of the Messiah. And now it has come. And what do we see? Crowds of people, the mangled bodies of policemen, beaten and murdered officers, furious and savage shouting. Liberty? People are seized and rushed to prison in motor-cars. Equality? Officers and generals are beaten to death. Fraternity? Nothing but malice, hatred and stupidity. I left my parents and came to Moscow."

"Why did you do that, Tom?"

Tom opened the Book and read out: " 'For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-

law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son and daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me.' I felt the whole force of these words. In the days of the revolution, I got estranged from my parents. I came to understand all their falsehood and stupidity. Christ said: 'Let the dead bury their dead.'—Christ demands that silence and reverence and quiet, befitting death, should be observed in the presence of one who has departed this life. But they have made the bodies of the dead, instruments of propaganda and drag them about from crowd to crowd like so many jackals and hyenas. Uncle, it is terrible to find out that one's parents are stupid! I loved them! But when I heard father call mother Azalea, I felt ashamed for him.

"In those days of bloodshed it was principally father's pal, Brodovitch, and Krug, the poet, a friend of mother's, who came to see us. Krug did not dress like ordinary people. He wore a blouse with an open collar which showed his neck, which was well kept and powdered, with blue veins shining through his white skin. It was vulgar, disgusting and stupid. Mother used to smoke perfumed cigarettes. They would talk about the achievements of the revolution, about the 'remote' which was lapis-lazuli in color, or the 'unknown' that was like azure, about 'Her,' about 'the Wife,' about the 'Stranger-Woman' and all sorts of wish-wash, giving mysterious meanings to

words that were simple enough in their ordinary sense. And meanwhile there was bloodshed everywhere and shooting and violence and mobs of brutal soldiers. I understood then that socialism was nothing but the outcome of the want of intellect in mankind. Father used to say that your life had been narrow and commonplace, that you were languishing in the chains of czarism, that cossacks used to lash you with their whips."

"Your father told you that?!"

"Yes, Uncle."

"I wish you knew, Tom, how untrue all this is. I'll try to make it clear to you how our life appeared to me. If only you had known my mother—your grandmother, her spiritual beauty, her exalted sense of duty! We were poor. Yet we enjoyed life, and many were the moments when our hearts beat faster in ecstasy, feeling the nearness of God. I remember well early matins on Easter night in my schooldays. I did not doubt for a moment then, I do not doubt it even now, that the resurrection of Christ is not a mere story, a legend, or even a great symbol, but that it is the truth! Or take for instance those occasions when I was in the presence of the Czar, I always was enraptured with enthusiasm at the mere sight of him. It was as if the shackles that tied me to this earth were falling off and I was floating in space. No, Tom, I must stand up for our life. It was not commonplace. Days of rest and merry-making made up for the drudgery of everyday life, we held sacred the prescripts of the

Church, observed our traditions and kept up Russian customs and Russian ways. There was warmth and light in our life!"

"There never was any in mine," said Tom sadly. "I believed in socialism and liberty, I lived to see their advent—and their absurdity. And I turned to Christ."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. It is difficult to do anything at present. It is as though we were living in a madhouse. I think I'll fight."

"What for?"

Tom did not answer at once. He sat in his corner with his eyes fixed on the curtainless window. The house where he lived stood opposite a large empty lot,—not a single light was visible outside, only black limitless space, in which Tom appeared to grope for an answer. When he spoke at last; he said in a low voice:

"For the Czar! I have arrived at this decision quite by myself—nobody has influenced me. Social life of mankind must be organised on simple lines. The simpler they are, the happier will the people be, and the better and easier will they arrange their lives. A Czar in heaven who directs and co-ordinates the forces under him, and a czar on earth who rules his subjects. When there is a czar, there will be no more of this abominable squabbling of parties, and this hateful hurry-scurry will cease. Then it will become possible to work, and incompetence will disappear."

Tom stopped. Fedor Michailovitch, following

Tom's eyes, was also staring into the dark night. The huge house was asleep, and the silence was oppressive.

"I wish someone would tell me what I must do, Tom," said Fedor Michailovitch. "Fighting for the Czar, I could understand that. But to fight for the socialists, for the Constituent Assembly after all that has happened,—no, I cannot do it."

He buried his head in his hands. There was weariness in his voice. Old age was seeking counsel from youth.

"Tom, tell me. . . What must I do? You are young. . . You, the prodigal son, have come back to Christ. You have been given a greater insight than mine. Tell me, must I really go and take service in the Red Army?"

Tom was silent. He kept on gazing into the dark outside the window. The earth continued on its course through black limitless space, and still and silent was its flight. Inscrutable and unknown are the ways of God, and who is it that can divine them?

Tom said in a low voice:

"Light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness receiveth it not."

## V.

It was some time before Fedor Michailovitch fell asleep in Tom's hard, uncomfortable bed. He was awakened by the sound of people talking in the little hall. He listened for a moment, then began to dress.

"Don't you try no bamboozling with me, comrade!" he heard somebody say in a hissing voice. "I am talking straight, I am. Orders is to catch shirkers and blacklegs, and—orders is orders!"

"Go away, friend," whispered Tom. "Why do you want to make trouble?"

Fedor Michailovitch looked out. He saw yesterday's slovenly soldier standing in the doorway.

The revolution had created this unforgettable, disgusting type of the revolutionary soldier. It was as if some gigantic separator had brought to the surface the very dregs of the Russian army: all that was hopeless, stupid, slovenly, corroded with disease, all those browless, noseless, moth-eaten individuals, habitués of hospitals, watchmen at depots, had come to the fore now and were in evidence everywhere and in everything.

The man in the hall was of middle height. His dull, unkempt hair of nondescript color was sticking out

from under his crumpled cap, the cockade of which had been smeared over with red. A pair of narrow squinting eyes with white lashes and no eyebrows were set in a sallow face, the skin of which was all wrinkles. His wide nose was staring ahead with its pair of black, wide-open nostrils, and a clipped whitish bristly moustache in no way helped to conceal his dry-lipped, unwashed mouth. His overcoat was tucked in anyhow under his belt, so that it was bulging out over his chest and hanging down untidily over his un-Russian looking puttees and boots. A cartridge-box and a hand-grenade were attached to his belt, and with his left hand he was holding the bayonet of a rusty rifle, with a length of packing cord in lieu of a sling. A bit of brownish red ribbon on his chest showed that he was a zealous devotee of the revolution.

"What do you want?" asked Fedor Michailovitch.

"So here you are!" exclaimed the soldier. "I thought I recognised you the other day, comrade, when you went out in the evening, and last night I followed your trail. You are Kusskoff, the ex-general?"

"Yes, I am General Kusskoff. But what do you want with me?"

"Remember the hell of a time I had at your hands when I served under your orders?"

"What do you mean?" asked Fedor Michailovitch, knitting his eyebrows.

"Do you see that?" said the soldier rudely, suddenly thrusting out his right hand close to Fedor

Michailovitch's face. The second and third finger were missing, evidently they had been shot off. "You had me brought before a court-martial for that. Slipped out of your memory, eh?"

"Oh, I begin to understand. You shot off your fingers, simulating an accident? Didn't you? And I believe I know now who you are. You are Sizoff, aren't you?"

"I am Sizoff, and no mistake!" answered the soldier. "And I am here to take you before a people's revolutionary tribunal to stand trial for what you done, blood-suckers that you are and executioners of the oppressed people!"

"You are crazy, Sizoff, quite gone off your head! How dare you!"

"Bah! Before it was you who dared. Now it's us. Just wait. You'll see what is going to happen when I bring my comrades! I'll tell them everything. We'll twist your fingers until they crack! To the tribunal with you! You will see then what it means having me court-martialed for deserting—deserters yourselves, when it comes to standing up for the people!"

"Get out!" cried Fedor Michailovitch. Purple with rage, he took the soldier by his collar; turned him round and opening the door sent him toppling down the stairs. The man would have fallen but that he managed to catch hold of the railings and came to a stop on the landing. He picked up his rifle, which had come rattling down after him, and tried to open the lock, but, rusty as it was, it jammed. Then he un-

hitched his hand-grenade, and was about to hurl it up the stairs, when abruptly, as if suddenly realising that he also might come to grief, he turned and noisily ran down the stairs. When he was fairly down one could hear, in the distance, the hissing sound of his voice, half stifled with rage and exertion:

"You just wait! Blast you! I'll remember it, you damned son of a dog! I'll bring my comrades, I will, I'll bring the people's commissar, they will give you hell! This ain't the czar's regime, damn you! The people won't stand it. To the wall with you. That's where you'll go, you mangy hound!"

Fedor Michailovitch shrugged his shoulders disgustedly and went into Tom's room.

Tom was standing at the window with his back towards him. He was staring into the snow-covered distance, and his breath was coming and going in heavy gusts.

"What is the matter, Tom?" asked Fedor Michailovitch.

"Uncle," said Tom, "you must go. This man is going to report you. In less than an hour, they will be here to arrest you. They are shooting people everywhere in town. You lost your temper, Uncle."

"You think I was wrong?"

"I hardly know what to say, Uncle. When I come to understand the holy Book, I'll tell you. Now I am all in a muddle, and the only thing I know is that you must go!"

"Where shall I go?"

"I'll take you to an old non-conformist priest behind the cemetery. He is a friend of the people here. You could stay with him for a time."

"All right, Tom. Let us go. But you too must hide somewhere."

"Don't trouble about me, Uncle; my personal life and my duty towards myself are clear to me, thanks to the Book. But what I do not as yet understand quite clearly is what my duty ought to be in relation to others and in cases like the present."

"Tom,—I do not understand what has come over me. I used to have a strong will; I always knew what I wanted and what I had to do. But now . . . I do not understand anything, and I am ready to follow you, a mere boy, wherever you will lead me!"

## VI.

Spring is on its way. The air is full of its music and sweet smells. The resinous fragrance of the poplar buds and new foliage of the birch-trees is everywhere, and wherever there is a strip of open ground in the streets of Moscow,—a garden, a boulevard,—the green grass has spread its velvety carpet, and trees and shrubs stretch their swelling twigs towards the azure of the sky.

A fresh wind is driving clouds of dust in the streets, making the red flags on the house-tops crack and flutter, and there is any amount of vigor in its bracing freshness. Large pools of stagnant water are covered with a green coat of growth, and the smell of drains and sinks, which have not been cleaned out for a long time, is becoming more offensive than ever.

Emaciated people, with greenish-grey faces and tired-looking eyes, unwashed and unkempt, and dressed anyhow in all sorts of discarded clothing, are rushing to and fro, jostling one another in their feverish haste. Endless queues are standing in front of the bake-shops, and in the Tyerskaya and on the Kuznetzky Most (which mean to Moscow what Fifth and Park Avenues mean to New York) creatures clad in rags are begging

for alms. They are the generals and high functionaries of yesterday.

Crowds of people are standing before the bulletin boards. In the south, the Cossacks are revolting; Alexeieff and Korniloff, generals of the Czar, are at grips with comrades Sorokine and Avtonomoff on the Kuban; there is unrest in Siberia. All Moscow is plastered over with posters, calling men to enlist in the ranks of the people's Red Army, and full of the victories won by the sailors and Red Guards "over that scum, the White Guards."

In the yard of the Alexander School of Cadets, in the riding-schools and garages, on the Khodynka field, the promiscuous shooting of officers, of cadets, of all sorts of other luckless people at hap-hazard, is in full swing. The new authorities are putting things straight! The families of those who served in the former Russian army, are taken under strict control and must register.

The days have become long. The sun rises early and sets late, and the dusk of night merges in the dawn of daybreak. It has become more difficult to hide in other people's houses, to lose one's identity in the crowd. People are starving, and there is no need of urging them to sell themselves or any information that is theirs. People betray one another, try to ingratiate themselves with the new authorities for the sake of a dole.

In all sorts of obscure corners, conspirators plan in whispers and hide from each other in unlit rooms. A

mysterious commission furnishes money to officers to go to the south. Hippolytus has arrived with instructions from the "Pale Man"—Savinkoff—the Social Revolutionaries are hatching a plot.

Tom had been tortured and shot; so had also the old couple with whom he had been living.

Fedor Michailovitch spent his nights wherever he could find a place to sleep. In bad weather it might be an unoccupied summer-house, sometimes an isolated barn, where he lay on the floor, with his old, worn overcoat as his bedding. Or, he would knock at the door of an "izba"—a peasant's house—asking to be taken in for the night, or else go to town. Once a week, at dawn, when the bustle of the soldiery subsided, he used to steal to his sister's flat in the Arbat, where Natasha stayed. There, with everybody else sound asleep, she would meet him in the empty hall and sit down by his side on the chest which stood in a corner. Wrapped in a shawl, she would nestle her warm body close to her husband, chilled to the bone by the morning dew, muttering words of love and tenderness. She had a satchel ready for him with his weekly provisions,—some bread, some roast meat, potatoes, tea and sugar. An expression of great sadness never left her grey eyes. These interviews had to be short. There was always the danger of the children waking up; they might spy on them and betray them.

Natasha hurriedly gave her husband the news of the family.

"Your godson, Fedor, has been enrolled in the Red

Army; his brother Benedict has disappeared; Lipotchka hopes that he is trying to get through to the Volunteer Army in the South. And Masha, just think of it,—she is scarcely sixteen,—she has gone as a typist with the commissar of our district. Lena has gone mad about fox-trotting. Andriushka is impossible,—one can do absolutely nothing with him. And, Fedia, we are starving. . . We have given up tea, and are using bilberry leaves instead,—we gather them in the woods. . . They threaten to billet lodgers on us,—they say that the work we do does not entitle us to the floor-space we occupy."

"What am I then," pondered Fedor Michailovitch on his way back to the fields and woods, "a criminal? Yet I have committed no crime to my knowledge. Let them tell me what I have done wrong. Let them put me on trial,—even execute me without trial! Why cannot they let me live quietly? I would not be in anybody's way. I would busy myself with binding books, and they would go on executing and destroying Russia and her people. Because of me, they have killed Tom and the couple with whom he lodged, and I . . . Must I keep quiet? . . . But what can I do?"

Hippolytus had come to see Lipotchka just when the family were going to have dinner. They sat down together at a table covered with a worn oil-cloth.

"Hippolytus," said Lipotchka, serving the soup, "as

a young girl I was disgusted with what Liza and I used to call the downfall of our family. Now it is not that any more. It is poverty, plain and simple, that is staring us in the face. Even my china service, given to me by Aunt Lenia, has been taken away by the workmen-lodgers who have been billeted on us."

"You, Lipotchka, may consider yourself lucky. You can still cook your own dinner at home, but we, Azalea and I, have been obliged long ago, to go out for our meals to the communal kitchens, and all we get there for our ration-cards is a little hot water for soup and some miserable salt fish as hard and dry as a stick," said her brother.

"The Potchtel* sees to our wants, thank heaven," said Benedict Benedictovitch, rubbing his hands. "We get our rations in kind. But where is Andriushka?"

"In the kitchen," said Masha, Lipotchka's eldest daughter, a well-built and slender girl with a handsome face. She had given up school, and was now serving as a typist at the local Tchrezvytchaika, or extraordinary commission. "I sent him to wash his hands. He came in as dirty as a pig—he had been stealing new potatoes somewhere in a kitchen-garden."

"Good," said Benedict Benedictovitch, brightening up. "Did he get any?"

"There he is," said Lena, the youngest daughter, who also had given up school, pointing a dirty finger at an untidy looking schoolboy of about twelve years,

* The union of post-office clerks.

who was entering the room singing at the top of his voice:

"For three rubles and a half,
I'll buy me a girl with fire!"

Rushing up to his mother, he shouted: "I say, mother, let us boil the potatoes afterwards! And now give me food,—I am hungry, mother, do you hear? I could swallow an ox!"

"Say 'How do you do' to your uncle first, and don't sing such songs. Remember that your sisters are here —young girls!"

"How funny mother sometimes is with her out-of-date notions about decency!" exclaimed Lena. "Really, mother, you seem to forget that we live in Sovdepia. What's so shocking in what he sings? In autumn, we are going to have our lessons together with the boys, and my friend Aniuta Polzikoff is going to have a child soon, and she does not know from which of the boys it is."

"How disgusting!" exclaimed Natasha, blushing.

"Aunt Natasha," said Lena with an air of importance, "it is simply life. There is nothing out of the common in it. Our inspector even approves of it; he says the socialistic state wants citizens."

"But how old is the girl?" Lipotchka could not help asking.

"Fifteen. . . Her face has become so thin, mother, her feet and hands have shrivelled up and look like those of a skeleton. But her figure has blown out like

a balloon, and she looks more like a spider than anything else on earth. She spends almost the whole of the day lying down," said Lena.

"I wonder," said Benedict Benedictovitch, evidently wishing to give another turn to the conversation, "when those Cossacks and Denikin will stop their fighting. And, as if that were not enough, the Czecho-Slovaks, or whatever they call themselves, have turned up God only knows from where. It never rains but it pours. There is no end to it. And because of their fighting, we must stay without bread;—meat we haven't seen for ages!"

"Father," cried Andriushka, interrupting Benedict Benedictovitch, "the Seniutkins have killed and eaten their cat. They say it was very good!"

"This is what we have come to," sighed Lipotchka.

"Mother, is it true that, when you were my age, you had a dog and a cat?" asked Lena.

"Yes," said Lipotchka, brightening up, with a blush. "Mother had a dog, called Damka, and your Uncle Fedia had a big grey cat whom he called Marquis of Carabas. We also had two bullfinches and a siskin."

"How funny," said Masha,—"a dog, a cat, birds. . . . You seem to have been regular bourjouis. And now, take my commissar, for instance,—even he has not got a dog. He would like to have one, a fox-terrier,—he has given orders to his soldiers to be on the lookout for anybody with a fox-terrier."

"Aren't you disgusted with all this?" Natasha asked her sister-in-law in a low voice.

"I wish you would chuck these highfaluting notions of yours, Natasha!" exclaimed Lipotchka. "What can you do? You can't kick against the prickle, a whip won't break a sickle. Much good it does to Fedia, this obstinate refusal to serve! He is worn out and as thin as a ghost. He looks like a tramp. And yet, he will persist in showing off. It would be much more reasonable of him to serve and get his rations. Take his fellow-officer, Startzeff, for instance. The other day I saw him driving past in a motor car. He looked quite important, with a red star and initials of some kind or other on his sleeve, and, sitting next to him, a bluejacket, chatting pleasantly like equal with equal. It is simple, Fedia also could be driving about with a bluejacket."

"I am afraid my commissar will end by getting Uncle Fedia," said Masha in a low voice. "The day before yesterday, eighty people were written off our books, . . . I typed the lists. He asked me if there was anybody among my relations who had formerly served in the army." Natasha was sitting next to Hippolytus. The dumplings, so resourcefully made up by Lipotchka out of stale bread and potato parings, stuck in her throat. Pale and thin in her plain dress, which she had made herself, she was sitting there, looking with her large eyes like a martyr. She tried not to listen, not to search for the meaning of these new ghastly ways, so full of bloodshed.

"In the days of accursed czarism," began Hippolytus, "when we were fighting the good fight—the fight

for liberty—every execution, carried out by the czarist hangmen, used to echo all over the country like the mournful tolling of funeral bells. There used to be a general outcry. We met here and there in obscure corners and discussed ways and means of rescuing the prospective victim, or how to take revenge when the execution had already occurred. We used to take revenge, too."

"Hush! For God's sake, not so loud!" exclaimed Lipotchka in a subdued voice, "have you quite forgotten our lodgers, the communists, in the next room? They are already looking askance at Dika, because he does not join the communist party, and I am not at all sure they are quite ignorant of Fedia's comings and goings. How can you talk like that!"

"Why," said Hippolytus, "am I to keep quiet then?"

"Yes,—keep quiet," said Benedict Benedictovitch with a frown. "I see quite well what awful rot all this is. But it is not we, old people, who are called upon to reform the new ways. Youth is preparing a future of its own. Remember only,—in our days also, students and young workmen used to be restless, but old people like us sat quiet in their places and waited for pay day and the decorations which would come to them in due course."

"No, Benedict, my father was a liberal. He did not drift with the current. He was always up in arms against injustice."

"Don't try to be funny, Hippolytus," said Lipotchka with a shrug of her shoulders. "If there ever was

anybody who did not do anything, it was father. All he did was play cards and make mother's life miserable. The only people who were really sensitive, who reacted to any injustice, were the younger generation. They. . ."

"You are right," interrupted Natasha. "And so it is even now. Only the standard of the present younger generation is much higher than it was in our days. Much, much higher! My Svietik, my Igor, my Oleg, and your Benedict, Lipotchka, have gone to make good for the sins of their fathers, and I believe in their victory."

"Bah, the Volunteers did not succeed in taking Ekaterinoslav, and Korniloff has been killed," said Benedict Benedictovitch. "A futile enterprise,—nothing else. Weak children attempting to fight experienced robbers!"

"And those who will win in the end will be the weak children!" exclaimed Natasha, getting up from the table.

"Natasha, Natasha, you will not keep your head on your shoulders long if you go on like this," said Lipotchka. "Your Cossack blood will be your ruin."

All got up from the table.

"For three rubles and a half,
I'll buy me a girl with fire,"

sang Andriusha, jumping over a chair. Masha left the room and soon returned in a fine big hat with

flowers on it. Pulling on her cream-colored gloves, she said:

"I'm off, mother. My commissar has invited me to go with him to a dance-hall; he has promised to bring some chocolates."

"And I am going to a cinema with Andriushka," said Lena, "there is a frightfully interesting film on—'A Pair of Bays'. It begins with a funeral and you can see the corpse of a woman. Lydia Ryndin is the heroine. Most fearfully exciting and dramatic!"

"There,—you see what they are, these children!" said Lipotchka, when they had gone. "It never even enters their heads to ask for their parents' permission. They come, they eat and go away again, and we don't even know where they are and with whom."

"It is the new generation," said Benedict Benedictovitch. "Charming, isn't it? Benedict with Denikin, Fedor in a red officers' training corps, Masha—with a commissar of the Tchrezvytchaika, but who he is or what their relations are—she never cares to tell us. Lena is running about with school-boys, and Andrew is stealing potatoes in kitchen-gardens. Have you ever seen anything as mad as that?"

"It is the regime of the Soviets," said Hippolytus, letting himself drop heavily into an armchair.

"All we were there for was to bring them into the world and set them on their legs,—the rest is no affair of ours," said Lipotchka, leaning against the door. "Do you remember how it was in our days, Hippolytus? The Easter holidays, and the eggs we used to

colour and to play with . . . Easter midnight service at school, and Easter supper afterwards . . . How the cannon used to boom and make the windows shake . . . And our summer-house in the country, our vague and endless arguments about what we had been reading . . . Liza with her philosophy and yearning to merge into the people.* And now, all that has gone, as if it had never existed. We were never content. We used to fret and complain. We hated exams, we hated our teachers, all we were longing for was to shake off our fetters. Now at last I begin to understand how necessary they were, those fetters. We ought to have loved our chains and revered and adored our mother!"

Lipotchka burst into tears.

* "Live among the people" was one of the slogans of the liberals of that period. Young boy and girl students often used to put it into practice. They lived with the peasants and expatiated wherever they could upon "the right of the peasants to the land."

## VII.

Abrasha Goldschmidt and Sania Portnoff came to inform Lipotchka that her son, Fedia Lissenko of the Red Officers' Training Corps had died of wounds received whilst helping to suppress the unsuccessful revolt of the Social Revolutionaries. They invited her to the funeral, which was to take place that day.

It did not take Lipotchka long to get ready. She threw a plain, black shawl over her head, and without pausing to change her down-at-heels house-shoes, she nimbly followed the messengers.

"We have come to fetch you in a motor-car," said Portnoff. "We want to do honor to the memory of our comrade in every way possible."

Lipotchka was silent all the way. Her heart was beating fitfully. Fedor had been her favourite son. He had reminded her of her brother Fedia. He had been as warm-hearted towards her as Fedia had been towards their mother, as clean-minded, friendly and full of spirits. His fondness of all things military too he had most probably inherited from his grandmother's side. He had readily entered the officers' training corps and had taken up artillery with an interest that had been much above the average.

The news of her son's death had stunned Lipotchka, but it had not surprised her as an event out of the common. From the moment when the Russian Empire had been displaced by the Labour Republic, not a single day passed without people being buried after having been killed, tortured, mutilated by the executioners of the new government. In their own house, with its numerous inmates, scarcely a day passed without someone missing. Relatives and friends would go to look for them in the yards of the "tchrezvytchaikas" and would find their mutilated bodies. Sometimes they would be allowed to take them away and bury them, but, more often than not, they would be sent away with contumely. It just depended upon whether the relatives of the victim could afford to bribe those in charge, or not, and on the mood of those whose business it was to account for the dead bodies. Now and then at dinner Benedict Benedictovitch recounted cases where capital punishment had been summarily meted out to employees of his department suspected of "sabotage" or counter-revolutionary tendencies. Masha also told every day of how many had been shot at her commissar's. An orgy of blood and death was raging all over Moscow. Whole families were melting away. Lipotchka's second son, Benedict, had disappeared and no one knew where he was. Fedor Michailovitch's whole family had scattered. Hippolytus' son, Tom—quiet, pensive Tom—had been shot.

In the course of this one year of Lenin's rule, death, murder, shootings, wounds, tortures had so much be-

come things of everyday occurrence, everybody had become so accustomed to them, that all these horrors had lost their sting.

Lipotchka knew somehow that her son would not be buried with the rites of the orthodox church,—they would bury him in the "new style." The thought of it touched her to the quick. She was not as religious as her mother had been. Religion, with its rites, reinforced by absolute faith in the Lord, had not penetrated into the depth of her soul. It appeared to her as some kind of formality. Yet when that formality was not present, it made her feel uneasy. Every year she went to confession and partook of communion, but she did it somehow indifferently, without that feeling of elation that had been her mother's. From the days of her childhood she had kept alive a certain feeling of bliss at the sight of the Chalice with the Lord's Supper. When she went to communion, she would put on a white dress, conscious of being the betrothed of Christ, and when she returned from church, she would sit down to tea and her little loaf of consecrated bread in awed silence. But she had not been given the strength to bring up her children in the same spirit, to instill the same feelings into their minds and hearts, and she used to practice her faith in secret from them.

As they were jolting along over the broken pavement of the streets of Moscow, Lipotchka reflected that her mother, Varvara Sergueievna, was standing on unattainable heights in a halo of luminosity. Her children had withdrawn from her; they had, as it were, de-

scended into a deep dark well, while Lipotchka's own children were falling into a bottomless abyss whence there was no escape nor rescue.

It was Lipotchka's first drive in a motor-car, and the whole situation had something in it which made her uneasy. It seemed to her that in the machine and in the Jewish youth, sitting next to her in his military uniform, there was something sinful, uncanny, un-Russian, un-orthodox, outlandish and . . . evil! This disconcerted her thoughts and did not allow her to concentrate wholly on the horror of her son's death.

A gun-carriage with four horses was standing next to one of the army huts. Carriage and horses were decorated with red ribbons. The motor-car stopped before the army-hut, and Abrasha Goldschmidt helped Lipotchka alight. He opened the door of the hut, and Lipotchka caught sight of a small room, red with flags and posters and crammed with people who were pressing round a low object in its centre.

"Gangway, comrades—gangway for Fedia Lissenko's mother."

The crowd opened before Lipotchka and she stepped into the centre of the room. Her first impulse was to cross herself and to kneel down, but, instead of that, she suddenly stopped and stood stone-still looking with frightened eyes at the room and the coffin before her.

The coffin, which was covered with red cloth, was smothered in flowers, scarlet ribbons and wreaths. It rested on two stools. It was closely surrounded by a crowd of young men,—some with their caps on, others

with bared heads, and all were gazing down at their dead comrade with an air of intent concentration, breathing hard through their noses. Fedor's frame had sunk, and his body had settled deep down on the very bottom of the narrow coffin. All that was visible of it through the masses of garlands of scarlet roses and lilies, huge bouquets of red phlox, poppies and peonies, was the head with its white face, with closed eyes and carefully smoothed and already lifeless looking reddish hair. No Bible, no cross had been put into the coffin, no priest had read prayers for the dead over it, no one had sung the words of the orthodox funeral service. The lid of the coffin had been placed against the wall at its foot. Its red surface was all covered with a design consisting of palm branches, wreaths, a pentagram, a sickle and a hammer.

These designs, so uncommon and unexpected on a coffin, impressed her like some kind of fearful symbols of freemasonry or mysterious hieroglyphics of the cabala, and the red colour of the cloth inspired her with fear and repugnance.

Lipotchka looked round. All was red with the colour of the flags and posters. The white and silver of the legends and emblems stood out in bold relief. The conventional manner in which the sickle and hammer were fashioned, made them look like some Egyptian idiogram full of hidden and sinister meaning. All round were stars intermingled with small branches like the loppings of a palm tree. The legends reeked of blood and vengeance:

"In everlasting remembrance of comrade Lissenko, who lost his life at the hands of a mob of oppressors."

"For thy life—a thousand of theirs!"

"No mercy from the guns of the Reds to those who caused thy untimely end!"

"Thou hast passed away, but thou shalt live within our hearts!"

The flowers emitted a heavy, rank smell which grew still heavier with the breath of the crowd and blended with the nauseous odor of decomposed blood.

The silence was oppressive. Dozens of people in blouses and tunics were standing all round, but nobody spoke. They seemed to be waiting for something.

Lipotchka stood at the head of the coffin, gazing tensely at the pallid brow of her dearly beloved Fedor. It was as if he were leaving her in a different fashion from her brother Andrew, her mother, her father . . . leaving her for ever and ever, with no hope of resurrection, a votary of Satan's, sentenced to damnation by all that red colour, all these legends and emblems.

She yearned for the smoke of the censers rising to the ceiling, to listen to the gentle words of the funeral rite said by the priest, the chanting of the response . . . the prayers. *And deliver us from the fire everlasting!*

Surrounded by all those red flowers, red flags, red posters, her Fedor, it seemed to her, was making his way to the red fire of blazing Gehenna.

Her heart contracted painfully. She wanted to drop to her knees and implore these young men to

send for a priest, to have the funeral service celebrated in accordance with the rites of the orthodox church.

She looked at their faces. They were harsh, immovably hard, matter of fact, impenetrable faces. . . Stolid faces. . . She understood at a glance that no kind of appeal could move or touch them. They had adorned the dead body with flowers, they had ornamented it with ribbons and wreaths, but they had no hearts and were unable to understand a mother's grief.

Her Fedor was doomed to sink into the terrible abyss whence there would be no return.

They had invited neither his father, nor his sisters, nor his brothers—they did not need to do it. Fedor was theirs, not hers, who had borne him and brought him up.

She knew that they were the strongest, with the power that was Satan's, and she bowed her head in helplessness.

She could not remember the words of any prayer, or lift her hand to make the sign of the cross. . .

"The photographer has come," suddenly said someone standing near the door.

Everybody began moving for the purpose of arranging a picturesque group round the coffin.

"Mother, you stand here," said Abrasha Goldschmidt.

"Turn the coffin a little this way, lift the head,—I don't get his face," ordered the photographer, and, following his directions, the coffin got shoved about, moved this way and that, lifted and lowered again

until he expressed himself as satisfied. The smell of decay grew stronger, and the buzzing of flies filled the air.

"Fix your eyes on his face, comrades," suggested somebody, "it will add to the effect of the picture."

"Gentlemen, I am ready. . . Comrades, don't move. . . . You, over there,—a little to the left, please. . . That's right. . . Please, do not move. . . One, two, three. . . One more picture, please."

When the photographer had gone, everybody began to move about and talk. The wreaths were cleared away and carried to the gun-carriage. The coffin, with its lid off, was made fast between its wheels. A band took up position immediately behind it and the musicians began tuning their instruments.

The sun shed its glory on the red ribbons and tinted the flowers with bright blotches of colour. A crowd of curious onlookers,—soldiers and a few women—had gathered on the field.

"Ready?"

"Ready!"

"Forward, March!"

The horses strained at their traces, the coffin gave a jolt, and Fedor, nodding his head imposingly on the top of the platform of the gun-carriage, proceeded on his way surrounded by the crowd. The band, rather out of tune, struck up the "International."

"Comrades, fall in,—we are going to sing. Pavlusha, lead the choir; Jenia, give us the key-note."

The musicians stopped playing.

"One hundred and fifty people have already been shot to atone for his death," said somebody standing close to Lipotchka.

"People say that Lenin has given orders to do away with them all, those swine."

"Serves them right, confound them!"

"They have killed Fedia, and any one of us may be killed by them too."

"That's just it,—nothing else can be expected from that murderous gang of bourjouis."

The fresh voices of the cadets burst forth in perfect unison into the words of the International:

Arise! ye starvelings from your slumbers;
Arise ye criminals of want,
For reason in revolt now thunders
And at last ends the age of cant.
Now away with all superstitions,
Servile masses, arise! arise!
We'll change forthwith the old conditions
And spurn the dust to win the prize.
Then, comrades, come rally,
And the last fight let us face,
The International
Unites the human race!"

Lipotchka strode along the dusty field, her eyes fixed on the coffin with its flowers and ribbons. She would have given her soul in order to hear, instead of these fearful words of hatred and these curses, instead of the glorification of that abominable thing they called the International—which was alien to her and which

she was utterly unable to understand,—the quiet, gentle, yet so profound words:

*Holy God, Almighty and Everlasting, have mercy upon us!*

## VIII.

EARLY one morning in September, just before dawn, Fedor Michailovitch was stealing along furtively through the suburbs on his way to the Arbat. His black overcoat was the worse for wear and in several places burnt through by camp-fires at which he had been trying to keep himself warm during the cold autumn nights. On his head he had a round fur cap of imitation beaver with a velvet top.

He had, for the last three months, been leading the life of a tramp, roving about in the woods and villages. He had tried several times to make his way to the south, but had every time been arrested and brought before the village commissars, where he had met his former soldiers. They had let him go with a piece of sound advice:

"You'd better take up service in the Red Army, comrade. We know you have always been a good chief, always looking after the wants of your subordinates. If men like you were on our side, the Cossacks and Denikin's bands would have been beaten long ago. There would be plenty of food and everything else would be A-1."

Or else they would say:

"Well, Your Excellency, no wonder things are all

in a muddle with Ilyitch.* Look at that crowd of rogues and Jews that surrounds him. If men like you sided with him, the chances are that Ilyitch may be top dog in no time."

As long as there was some warmth in the air, Fedor Michailovitch managed to get along, but he realised that soon the problem of winter-quarters would have to be solved.

Things were going from bad to worse for the Soviets on all fronts and anybody who gave shelter to officers of the old army did so at the risk of his life.

And yet there were people who would take that risk. Sometimes it was a priest, or a village schoolmistress, or a student, who took him in for the night; at other times some poor family in the suburbs or some petty artisan. They all guessed who he was, and all helped in every possible way.

He tried to make himself useful. He worked in the garden, dug potatoes, chopped cabbage for pickles, sawed wood, loaded barges, unloaded trucks. But he never risked staying long in the same place. After a day or two people might begin to talk, and then—disclosure and betrayal would be inevitable. He was obliged to be constantly on the move, going from door to door, asking to be taken in "for Christ's sake."

Fedor Michailovitch was like a hare running from the hounds: doubling, crouching close to the ground, changing direction, and realising all the time that all

* Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin.

this would not save him, that the hounds were going to get him in the end.

Haggard and weatherbeaten, worn out with heavy work, unshaven, he was now on his way to keep his usual appointment with Natasha.

He slipped cautiously through the gate that had been unlocked by Natasha at nightfall, crossed the yard and entered the house. The chilly damp of the place enveloped him.

At the sound of the door opening and of his tired footsteps ascending the stairs, somebody gave a sigh on the top landing and began coming down hurriedly.

Rather by guesswork than by sight he recognised Lipotchka in the darkness.

"Lipotchka, what has happened? Is Natasha all right?"

"Oh, don't get upset—nothing has happened to your Natasha, she is waiting for you in the hall. But I must speak to you before you see her, I have been waiting for you all night. I am shivering with cold."

"What is it?"

"Let us sit down."

They sat down on the steps.

"Well, Fedia, this is what I wanted to tell you. Yesterday, Masha,—by the way, she has given herself to her commissar and is living with him now—"

"Lipotchka, how dreadful, how monstrous!"

"Yes, Fedia. . . But they belong to a new generation; and we shall never understand them, or they us. She says they all do it now. And this is what they

call 'looking out for themselves.' The commissar, I don't even know his name, nor who he is, only one thing seems to be certain, he is not a Jew and is a man of some education. . . Well, the commissar told Masha that he was aware that you were here and came to see us, and that it had been decided, if you didn't within the next three days go and register at the Commissariat of War, to arrest Natasha and send her to Petrograd to the Extraordinary Commission, 2 Gorokhovaya,—you know what that means . . . no one leaves the place alive!"

"Lipotchka!"

"Fedia, you must save Natasha, you must save us all. I must say that I cannot even blame Masha. By sacrificing herself she takes care of us all. Very often she brings us food. Yesterday, for instance, she brought in twenty pounds of rice and half a pound of tea. Only imagine . . . you are going to have rice pudding. Listen, I know you so well! I would understand your attitude, if there were a national movement under the leadership of a Czar, if anybody were out to restore Russia in all her former greatness and might under the sceptre of the Romanoffs. Everybody would understand that. But what difference is there between the Soviets and the Directorate of Ufa, or the Constituent Assembly, or Denikin, with his appeal for a 'Russia one and indivisible,' which, when you come to think of it, is no Russia at all!"

"I cannot go with the Jews, Lipa; the very thought disgusts me."

"I should think so, but on the other hand. . . I often think of Fedor's funeral. There was nothing Christian about it, I dare say, . . . but still, there were flowers and ribbons . . . and say what you like, they are not absolutely devoid of feeling. There is something stirring within them, the young ones especially. It would be worth while to foster that something and bring it out, and I think you ought to make this your business, you, the officers of the old army."

"I cannot do it."

"I wish you had something else to say except that 'I cannot' of yours. If it meant suffering and fighting for the Emperor, for the true faith, traditions of centuries, fundamental supports of Russia the Great, I understand how we would gladly give away our lives for the cause. But all there is now is Lenin, Tchernoff, Avksentieff, Tchaikovsky, Denikin and so on. What do you think is going to happen if Denikin wins? That endless speechifying and squabbling will break loose once more, there will be lists of candidates, ballot-boxes hastily made up out of card-board cigarette boxes, elections, meetings, brawls. There is absolutely nothing to choose from . . . really."

Fedor Michailovitch did not answer. With bent shoulders, his shaggy head buried in his hands, he sat by the side of his sister. What could he say? From her point of view Lipotchka was right. She had lost her lofty ideals and had become "sovdepized," she had slid to the level of a drab servant whose horizon and interests did not go beyond her kitchen. She had

reverted to the instincts of a mere female defending her young. She was moved by the wreaths and flowers on her Fedor's coffin, but the thought that he had been killed in a fratricidal fight did not impress her at all with its horror. She could derive genuine pleasure from the twenty pounds of rice and half a pound of tea Masha had brought her at the price of shame, degradation and vice. She was trying hard to keep up the semblance of a family, and would close her eyes to the fact that her eldest daughter, mistress of a commissar, her youngest—steeped in vice and experienced far beyond her fourteen years—and her son, a petty thief, had ceased to be elements of any family.

"You are asking me, Lipotchka, to take up service with those who have shot your nephew," said Fedor Michailovitch rising, "who have caused the death of your son and the dissolution of your family. They have wrecked the most sacred thing in the world—the family. They have destroyed the state. They have torn out God from the hearts of the young! And you want me to help them deal the final blow to whatever is left of the state and go on breaking up families and corrupting children? No, Lipotchka, you do not know what you are saying!"

Fedor Michailovitch began climbing the stairs. His legs were like lead, and he felt as if he had suddenly grown ten years older. Lipotchka followed him.

"Fedia, you do not understand me," she said, reaching out for him with her thin arms. In the dim light of the staircase she seemed to stand out like the spectre

of despair. "I know all the details of your life. It has been full of self-sacrifice and saintly achievement. And now I am asking you for a new sacrifice, for a new act of self-denial. I am asking you to save, at the price of your own 'self', Natasha, to save me, to save all our kin. Even there, serving with the Bolsheviks, you will know how to be useful to our country. Not at once, but little by little, day by day, your influence, your example of steadfast honesty will tell on them. Beholding you, youth will understand that it is not the International, but Russia that matters. I implore you to take up the cross of suffering and toil; it is not a life of ease and comfort I am offering you."

Fedor Michailovitch continued up the stairs. On the landing of the fourth floor he stopped.

"Do you know, Lipotchka, how I feel at this moment? If I did not believe in God and did not think it a mortal sin to commit suicide, I would get a rope and hang myself. I am looking down this staircase-well and feel tempted to throw myself down on those flag-stones below and lie there dead, blind and deaf to all these abominable things which are going on all round us."

"That is no way out, Fedia."

"I know—there is no way out," said Fedor Michailovitch, wearily resuming his ascent. "That is exactly where the difficulty lies; without the Czar there is no way out."

"Fedia," called out Lipotchka after him, "Natasha knows nothing of this. Don't tell her."

Fedor Michailovitch stopped. Lipotchka was going down the steps, a black speck in the uncertain light. She looked so small, helpless and scared.

"Where are you going, Lipotchka?" he shouted down to her.

"To take my place in the queue. We are getting our bread rations to-day."

She disappeared in the dark.

Fedor Michailovitch heaved a deep sigh and knocked lightly at the door. The door opened noiselessly.

In the dim light of a solitary candle he saw Natasha standing in the hall, wrapped in a grey shawl.

## IX.

"To WHOM were you talking on the stairs?" asked Natasha, kissing her husband.

"To Lipotchka."

"Why, I did not see her go out. Where was she off to?"

"To stand in the queue for bread rations."

"She is constantly on the move looking after us. A veritable Martha she is, never tiring. Sit down, darling,—you look thinner than ever."

Natasha had laid a small table in front of the chest. Some porridge in a pan which she had covered with a towel to keep it warm, a tea-pot, a glass, a piece of bread and some salt were all she had been able to scrape together in their impoverished household. In the light of the flickering candle one could distinguish a hall-stand and three doors, one leading into the study, which now was used as a bedroom by the workmen-lodgers, another to the dining-room, where Benedict Benedictovitch and Andrew were sleeping, and the third opening into the passage. The air in the hall was raw and stale.

"Don't take off your overcoat," said Natasha, tightening her shawl round her, "it is cold here. Eat, darling. It is not exactly the time for a meal, I dare say, but it will do you good."

Fedor Michailovitch gazed eagerly at her beloved features. Natasha had grown thinner, but to him she appeared even more beautiful than she had at Djarkent, where the romance of their life had begun. She was his companion who had gone with him through life, who had borne and brought up his children.

"Why do you look at me like that?" she said, smiling. "Am I getting ugly? My hair is falling out terribly; it is want of food, I believe. Have you thought yet of what you are to do now the cold is setting in? Where will you find a hiding-place? But why do you keep on staring at me?"

Natasha smiled with the old charm.

"Deliver her into the hands of the tchekists?" thought Fedor Michailovitch, "to torture and death?"

"Natasha," he said, pushing away his empty glass, "I should like to shave; this beard always makes me feel as if I had not washed."

"I'll bring your shaving things at once, my darling."

"There, you, too, are just like Martha of the Gospel, constantly on the run ministering to my creature comforts, and we have no time for talking things over," said Fedor Michailovitch, when Natasha had fetched a looking-glass, his razors, a towel and some soap.

"Well, Fedia, people are very often inclined to think of Martha as if she were inferior to Mary. And yet, without her, Mary would not have been able to satisfy her thirst at the eternal spring of life. She would have had to give herself up to looking after the com-

forts of the Beloved Guest. One cannot go through life without Martha's help."

"Just so," said Fedor Michailovitch, shaving,—"so you don't blame her?"

"Whom do you mean? . . . Martha?"

"No . . . Lipotchka."

"Good heavens, Fedia! How could I blame her, miserable as she is! Think what her life has been. One continuous uphill fight for some kind of footing, for a little happiness, for a quiet haven of rest. And no sooner have the first signs of some kind of improvement begun to show, when—bang! comes this revolution, and the work of her lifetime crumbles to dust. She must sell her paltry chattels to keep body and soul together."

"And what about Masha? You do not blame her either?" asked Fedor Michailovitch, who had finished shaving one side of his face and now was going to apply the razor to the second half.

Natasha hesitated for a moment.

"I do not understand her," she said at last. "It all appears to me so full of filth. . . However, Fedia, we shall never understand them, and our standards cannot be applied to what they do. . . Without marriage . . . without the church. . . They prefer any cinema, any dance-hall to the church. The bliss of faith and unity with Christ are quite incomprehensible to them."

Only the scraping sound of Fedor Michailovitch's

razor and the crackling of the guttering candle broke the silence for a while.

"I pity them all," Natasha said gently. "I feel infinitely sorry for the younger generation. They do not know beauty, the bliss of prayer or love. Their souls are dead asleep, if not dead altogether. What have they seen of life? Take, for instance, Andrew and Lena. When their souls were just attaining maturity to open to higher impressions, what did they see, what did they hear? Revolutionary processions, hysterical bursts of eloquence at meetings, the bellowing forth of that hymn of hatred, the International! They are simply unhappy, Fedia."

Fedor Michailovitch had finished shaving and was looking at the reflection of his sunken cheeks.

"What a fright I look!" he said. "I am afraid you won't love me any more."

"I do love you, and even more than ever."

"Natasha, don't you think one could make them better if one tried?"

Natasha put her arms round his neck and drew his head to her breast. He heard the fast beatings of her heart. Turning her face towards his with an abrupt movement that made her shawl slip off her head, revealing her auburn hair, Natasha looked deep into his eyes.

"We shan't be allowed to try," she said in a toneless voice.

Fedor Michailovitch put his arm round her shoulders and, drawing her close to him, kissed her lips.

"How nice you smell," she whispered. "You smell of fields and woods. You are the wolf, and I am Little Red Riding-Hood, and you are going to eat me. It is so nice when you are with me! I forget everything then, and I feel as though nothing had changed and I was still the same little girl happy in our garden in Djarkent, looking after my trees and flowers and singing in the choir at church on Sundays. You know, we have formed a new congregation, we are going to have a choir and I shall sing again at church. Never mind, Fedia,—we are going to look up again, and this blight will pass away. The Whites are sure to come and set us free. Svietik will come, and Igor, and Oleg,—they all will come back again, and Liza, too, will return to our home! They are so different from our nephews and nieces! In one way or another, all is going to be well again,—fate has still happy days in store for us, Fedia, my darling!"

They were sitting close to each other. Memories of the past and dreams of the future mingled in their quiet communion. They did not feel the necessity of many words. A short sentence here, a word there, a hint was all they needed.

They were interrupted by the sounds of somebody coughing and noisily stretching in Lissenko's study.

"They are awake!" whispered Natasha. Her eyes had dilated and glistened with loathing and suffering. "Go away! Darling, precious, please, do go away!"

She helped Fedor Michailovitch into his overcoat and went out with him on the landing. The grey

morning-light was pouring through the tall, dusty windows and revealed the staircase in all its ugliness. Filthy pails of garbage were standing in front of the grimy and shabby doors, and dust and rubbish had accumulated all over the landing. No broom had touched the steps since the first days of the revolution.

Natasha blessed Fedor Michailovitch with the sign of the cross and kissed him passionately.

"We shall be happy yet," she said. Her eyes were brimming with tears.

Fedor Michailovitch descended the stairs, drooping with weariness and despondency.

Natasha's eyes followed him. When he had reached the bottom landing he turned, looking up to her.

"We shall be happy yet!" she shouted down to him.

Fedor Michailovitch turned abruptly away. With bent head, he rapidly crossed the stone paved entrance-hall, strangely mincing his steps as he walked, and went out into the street.

## X.

About two in the afternoon of the same day, Fedor Michailovitch went up to the lofty, magnificent building that formerly had been Moscow's best hotel. The revolution had left its marks on the mansion: a great number of window-panes had gone and had been replaced with sheet-iron and cardboard. In many places the plaster had been knocked off the walls, the red bricks had been laid bare and looked like red wounds.

Several motor-cars were stationed in front of the hotel. Over its entrance hung a large discoloured red flag. Sheaves of telephone wires led to the windows. At the entrance, a sailor, with a red armlet on one of the sleeves of his black overcoat, was standing on duty. Tufts of long hair were hanging down on his snub-nosed womanish face. His cap, with its red ribbon, had been put on like a woman's bonnet. Its cockade had been removed, and an anchor had been put in its place. With a dull look he examined Fedor Michailovitch as he entered.

In the hall, an old porter in soiled, plain clothes, receiving his overcoat, whispered stealthily into Fedor Michailovitch's ear:

"Is your Excellency aware that the house is occupied by the Bolsheviks?"

Fedor Michailovitch gave a start. He turned crimson and began mounting the stairs. On the first landing, he was stopped by a young Jew who wore a rimless pince-nez and displayed a tuft of hair under his nose. He was dressed in a leather jacket, and a revolver was hanging on its belt.

"What is your business?" he asked.

"I want to see General Startzeff about being registered," muttered Fedor Michailovitch in a low tone.

"Comrade Startzeff," repeated the Jew,—"second floor, passage on the left, room two sixteen. Comrade Monia, will you show the way."

A well-built girl, in a white blouse and short skirt, got up from her typewriter. She had a pretty face with intelligent, expressive brown eyes. Her hair was bobbed and hid her ears. She stepped forward with a firm foot, displaying a pair of plump calves encased in clocked silk hose, and said:

"Come on, comrade."

A filthy room full of tobacco smoke, with a stuccoed ceiling and parquet floor. Desks,—piles of papers,—half-emptied glasses of weak tea,—slices of black soviet bread. Everywhere the untidiness and confusion of stray people who have come but will not stay. Young men were sitting at the desks, some of them wearing blouses of greenish-grey cloth, others again officers' tunics or civilian clothes. Their faces were thin, with cheek-bones protruding. Their dilated eyes glowing with excitement showed that they were discussing something passionately, but silence fell abruptly

when Fedor Michailovitch entered the room. A very curly-headed Jew, about thirty, with bright eyes, a black, drooping moustache and a short black beard, came up to Fedor Michailovitch. His face was well groomed, and his lips, which were vividly red, made the whiteness of his teeth still more conspicuous. In better days he might have been judged to be a solicitor, or a dentist, or a hairdresser.

"May I ask you, comrade, to kindly state your business?" he said to Fedor Michailovitch with exaggerated politeness.

"I am General Kusskoff and have come to register," Fedor Michailovitch said in a firm voice.

"General Kusskoff—General Kusskoff—" This information was passed on in a whisper from desk to desk, and eight pairs of dark eyes fixed themselves on Fedor Michailovitch.

"You will have to wait a little," said the Jew. "Take a seat, please."

Fedor Michailovitch sat down on a small gilt sofa in a corner of the room. It evidently belonged to the hotel furniture, and now, with its upholstery torn by boots, it looked a most unnecessary and dirty addition to the office furniture of the room.

From his seat, Fedor Michailovitch was able, without lifting his head, to take in all the details of the room and its occupants.

"What is this place? Who are these people?" he asked himself, and it was with difficulty that he could bring himself to believe that it really was one of the

departments of the War Commissariat, the General Staff of the Red Army in fact. Everything he saw now was so unlike it used to be in the old army. He recalled how, whenever he had had occasion to visit the General Staff, the offices of that department had never failed to impress him. There he used to see an immense system working on time and labour-saving principles. In every chair sat a man who had devoted long years of energy and study to the subject entrusted to his care, and all worked in close correlation to each other, like cog-wheels in a huge piece of machinery.

What did he see here? Instead of well ordered filing-cabinets, with their dossiers, registers, memoranda, cards, maps and diagrams, from which full and up-to-date particulars could be obtained at a moment's notice about any of the units of the army, untidy bundles of loose sheets of paper were lying about on dusty desks. At a window a girl with a powdered face was busily typing. Are new creative ideas at work, or are they trying to carry on what they found when they came into power?

The room was thronged with people. Beside the typist, there was another girl, with a pince-nez on her nose, who was smoking a cigarette, looking out of the window, lost in dreams. Formerly, women were only occasionally seen on the Staff's premises, and then only in the reception-room. Most of them were in mourning,—widows of officers petitioning for pensions or grants-in-aid. In the inner offices there were

no women. There was the sanctum sanctorum of secrets, of stern work.

Fedor Michailovitch realized that everything he saw here left him absolutely indifferent.

Who are these people to whose care the new government has entrusted the fortunes of the new army?

At the window, next to the typist, a tall, broad-shouldered young man was sitting. His wavy chestnut hair was brushed back. His delicate nose and protruding under lip lent to his face an expression of caprice. His features spoke for themselves. What could he know about the organisation of an army?

Another young man was lounging on a chair at another window. His military cap was crumpled and pushed far back on to his neck. A silver sword-belt encircled his waist, and a sword, a priceless specimen of the armorer's art, with the insignia of St. George on the sword-knot wound over with red ribbon, was hanging on the belt. On the hip of his close-fitting greyish-blue riding-breeches, a heavy Mauser pistol was snugly lying in its wooden case. His browless and beardless face was pale. His light, narrow eyes scrutinized Fedor Michailovitch with an expression of calculating cruelty and lingering immaturity. Who is he? Certainly not a Russian,—a Lett may be, or an Esthonian. Probably a youth just out of some school or other, where he has been a bully to smaller boys. To-day, he wears fierce spurs on his boots, carries himself like a person of consequence, is in some kind of authority and one of the "organisers" of the

army. But—what does he care about Russia and her fate?

A sailor stands on duty at the door. His beardless young face is marked by smallpox and has a mottled complexion. His squinting small eyes rove furtively all over the room. From time to time he casts an evil glance at Fedor Michailovitch and quickly turns away again, squinting at the wall. His nose is flat like the bill of a duck. His bare, thickset neck is powdered. His fingers are covered with rings set with precious stones. The cast of his face is that of a hooligan.

The rest of the company are birds of the same feather. They have flocked together to build up "the people's red army of peasants and workmen." They have been called upon to create a firm foundation for the state!

As though they could create anything! All they were really able to do was to destroy. And so they had come together here to tear up, and leave no traces of what had borne the proud name of the Russian Imperial Army, that bulwark of order and safety that had been his pride and the object of his worship all through his life. And he had come to lend them a hand!

He wanted to get up and go away, but the words of Tom came back to him:

"Light shineth in the darkness."

One of the tall carved doors was flung open, and a young man, smartly dressed in a tight-fitting tunic, appeared.

"Comrade Kusskoff, this way, please," he said.

Fedor Michailovitch got up—his mind a blank. Automatically he smoothed down his blouse and followed.

He felt as though he had thrust the cold muzzle of a pistol to his ear and pulled the trigger.

## XI.

### FEDOR MICHAILOVITCH'S DIARY

On September 28th, 1918, between five and six p.m., I went from the War Commissariat straight to my sister Lipotchka's house to tell my people that I had taken up service with the Red Army. All the members of her family—her husband, Benedict Benedictovitch, Lipotchka herself, my wife Natasha, Lipotchka's daughters Masha and Lena, and her son Andrew were sitting in the dining-room clustering round the "burjuika," an iron stove which they were trying to work for the first time. It serves the double purpose of heating and cooking, as there is not enough wood for the ordinary stoves of the house. The stove did not draw, and the room was full of smoke, but at any rate it was warm! Lipotchka was sincerely pleased at what I had done. She gave me both her hands and said:

"You have done the right thing! I know what this sacrifice has cost you, and no one can appreciate it more than I do!"

Natasha got up from her chair. For a while she looked intently into my eyes, as if trying to find something that might be hidden in the innermost recesses of my mind, and then said in a low voice:

"No, Fedia, you have *not* done it! You will never go there! You are not capable of meanness, and I'll never believe that you have really done a thing as mean as that!"

Benedict Benedictovitch felt hurt at that.

"Well Natasha," he said, "do you consider me and Masha guilty of committing a meanness?"

"O, it is not that! It is not that at all!" was all she said at last, and left the room.

Ever since, Natasha has not spoken to me. She does not answer my questions, she is absolutely indifferent to everything, she does all she is told to do, but does not talk to anyone. There is a split in the family. All this weighs terribly on my mind, and depresses me more than I can say.

On October 10th, I moved with Natasha to the lodging which has been commandeered for my use. I have been appointed a member of the War Council with orders to live in Moscow. The lodging is quite decent. Three rooms. One is Natasha's bedroom, in another I have arranged my private office which I also use as a bedroom, sleeping on a couch. It goes without saying that the furniture is nobody's personal property —it has all been taken away from somebody. The third room is our dining-room and also serves as a living- and bed-room to the commissar who has been specially appointed to keep me under observation. He is a member of the communist party, but otherwise quite a decent young fellow. In the hall sleeps my

orderly, a smart soldier with an intelligent, impudent face. Everything has been arranged so that I can never speak to Natasha in private. The walls are thin, and whenever I try to speak to her, be it even in a whisper, there is a knock at the door and in comes the orderly or the commissar pretending to be looking for something.

I cannot go out alone anywhere. If it is not the commissar, it is the orderly, but one of them is constantly hanging on to me. They are always polite and well behaved, and I have no reason to complain of either of them. I like to talk to them, especially to the commissar; he is rather interesting. He sees perfectly well the blunders and errors which the Soviet authorities are committing, his criticism is always very much to the point,—but still,—I am always on my guard when talking to either of them.

I am writing all this at the front where I now am. In Moscow anything I wrote or anything anybody sent me in writing invariably fell into the hands of the commissar.

Natasha does not speak. She never goes into the room where the commissar is, and whenever she happens to meet him, she never shakes hands with him and takes as little notice of him, as if he were nothing but thin air. She never relents and keeps herself under perfect control.

What is her feeling towards me? Is it contempt? Or is it hatred? or pity? She simply does not understand me! We are standing on opposite shores, and

our voices do not carry far enough to let us communicate with each other. Where she is—there is God and Christ, and—I—I am with the Prince of Darkness and his legions. Of this she is absolutely sure.

She is very often at prayer. She sings in the choir of the little church where I was once last winter. I have never been there again; I have been requested in a very courteous manner to abstain from going to church for the time being and so avoid throwing temptation into the people's way.

What has the Church done to them? Why do they hate it so? How I wish I could tell Natasha everything! But how can I? Above all things she must know *why* I did it, she must know that it was for her sake, and for her sake alone. But then,—she will never accept a sacrifice of this nature, she will rise in revolt and bring things to a point where trouble will be absolutely unavoidable, and that will seal her doom. . . No, I cannot do it and besides, it is too late now. . . I very often think of Tom: Well, I have got to make good and—shine! Christ descended into Hell. But I am not Christ! How little there is left of Christ in me! And even that little is getting less and less. I must unravel this tangled skein,—I must make everything clear to myself.

I think that even if I *could* bring Natasha to listen to what I have got to say, if I could make her take everything in, even then she would not understand me and she would not forgive.

Her insight into things is so much deeper than mine.

Mother would not have understood me either,—neither would she have forgiven! Mother expected me to be always prepared for self-denial and deserving deeds. Natasha, too, will expect me to do the right thing, and I am all for doing it, but how can I, if it means immolating her at the same time . . .?

Long ago, as a little boy, I used to make fun of our old nurse Kloosha. I laughed at her belief in evil spirits. I used to say to her: "What are they like? Have they got horns and tails?" I believed then that there were no demons, neither then nor afterwards did I believe in the Devil. All the researches of the theosophists, all speculations about the astral body and its properties were to me mere ramblings of leisurely minds run wild. I was a materialist pure and simple. I was occupied with my military service, and, leaving subtle reasoning to others, I drilled my soldiers, went to the Staff-College, became commanding officer of a company, a battalion and regiment in succession. I fought in the War. I have had my share of visions in the course of my life; but I never wasted much time in musing over them.

But, did I believe in God?

I most certainly did, and still I believe in His creative power, that he is the All-Mighty and All-Merciful, I believe in the luminous hosts of heaven and many a time have I had proof of their invisible ministration.

But, if there is a God with His hosts of angels, there is also—opposed to God in combat—Satan, with all his forces of darkness.

I believe in God. Can I do it and, at the same time refuse to believe in the existence of the Devil?

How absurd! Here we are, living in the twentieth century, the age of electricity, wireless telegraphy, stupendous feats of technical skill, prodigious wealth of universal knowledge, and I, a general of the General Staff and father of a large family, suddenly discover that I believe in the Devil, like an old woman, like old nurse Kloosha! . . . But then, what other reason can there be for making them assault the Church and the clergy with the frenzy they do? Why do they? Why are they so much afraid of the Church? Why do they introduce that red star on caps and sleeves, that five-pointed star, which is nothing but that very same inverted pentagram with the head of the symbolical he-goat in its centre? Why do they spare no effort in inoculating blasphemy of God into the people? Why have they set to work a whole horde of poetasters and literary hacks scoffing at God and made sacrilege into a public cult? Is it because they are Jews?

No, . . . for they are far from being all Jews there. . . It is . . . because. . . But I had better follow the order of events.

I find it difficult to tell everything in chronological order. My thoughts are all in a tangle. In order to

make everything clear I must digress from my main subject.

Comrade Zabolotny had arrived in Moscow from the front. I remember him as a crack troop-sergeant of the second squadron. I first saw him shortly before the revolution, in Turkey, in Asia Minor. I was commanding a regiment on the Turkish front when we heard the news of Rasputin's murder. Soon after, we were joined by a certain person of high rank. He received a warm welcome, which, in some regiments, developed into very nearly triumphal receptions, as though people desired to emphasize their protest against the severe punishment that had been so undeservedly meted out to him. I remember one evening with one of the cavalry regiments. The sun was setting behind the purple mountains. Far away in the desert the reflected images of the mirage were flickering out in the cooling air. The sand dunes were tinted with red. The primitive stone huts of the natives were standing out like cromlechs of the stone ages. In the stone enclosure of a fold nearby, sheep and goats were huddling up close to each other for the night, and the plaintive notes of their bleating trembled in the calm air. It was the life of primeval man, of ancient Assyria and Babylon that had come down all through the ages to our days in the garments of the natives, in the earthen water-pitchers, in the graceful way women were carrying them on their shoulders. We were sitting in a tent the sides of which had been thrown open. It stood on the fringe of the village. The winter

night was coming in close on the heels of the retreating sun, with a promise of frost in its icy breath. The flame of the candles which were burning in heavy candlesticks on the low table hardly flickered in the calm air. From behind the tent came the contented whinnying of the horses, as the troopers hung nose-bags with barley at their heads.

We were sitting in a semi-circle, feasting our eyes on the looming distance of the evening sky and the purple mountains behind which the fiery sun was setting.

The singers of the regiment arrived. It was a choir about eighty strong, under the leadership of a smart troop-sergeant wearing on his breast the crosses of all four degrees of the order of St. George. He drew himself up smartly, called his troop to attention and stood at attention himself, his eyes fixed on our august guest.

The colonel of the regiment made a sign . . .

Up struck the "zoornah" like a bag-pipe, accompanied by the throbbing of the "tooloombass"—which is a small drum; and the plaintive notes of an eastern tune played by Russian soldiers came pouring forth. The music blended harmoniously with the surroundings until it seemed that the very sand-hills were singing the song of the past—the same melody, all through the ages. Then, almost imperceptibly, the tune changed its character. First one Russian note crept into it, it was soon followed by another,—they grew in volume, became stronger until, dominating the other

notes, they were joined by the soft tenor of a human voice. For a while it sang alone, then a barytone struck in, and presently a Caucasian song burst forth. Swelling at times to a mighty roar, as it was taken up by the whole of the eighty voices, and then dying down again, it rolled along over the vast expanse of the valley of the Euphrates.

The troop-sergeant stood in front of the choir and sang as though carried away by the powerful waves of the song.

We talked of Russia's glory and might, of her great achievements. We all agreed that nobody but we, Russians, could boast of such songs and such music, that nowhere else could be found a greater assimilation of two distinct principles of human progress than in the Eurasian civilization, the bearers of which we, the Russians, were. Our conversation was carried on in loud voices, with great animation, without restraint. The soldiers and the troop-sergeant had stopped singing and were listening attentively to what was being said.

Behind our backs, in the silvery expanses of the sky, the moon was rising, its large red disk smudged, as it were, with the grime of the smoke colored cloud, out of which it emerged.

"Well, lads, why don't you sing? Let us have another one!" said the Colonel.

The troop-sergeant woke up with a start. He drew himself up and, fixing his eyes once more on our august visitor, began a song of the Caucasian Cossacks.

*"From the borders of midnight to the distant noon*
*A king eagle descended on powerful wings . . ."*

A clear voice set in, interweaving itself in the Cossack style, with the leading notes of the song, at times tinkling like a silver bell, at times sounding like a wonderful violin.

Unforgettable night! All seemed so firmly established and steady then, and steadiest of all—the troop-sergeant!

When the singers were leaving, the moon was riding high and threw shadows full of mystery from every object. One of the soldiers was out of step, and the tinkling of his spurs clashed with the rhythmical tramp of the rest of the troop.

"Left foot, left! You son of . . .! I'll teach you manners, confound you!" the troop-sergeant barked into his ear.

"There is a fine troop-sergeant," I thought, "a stickler for discipline, a smart fellow!"

I asked his name.

"Oh," said one of the officers, "this is Semion Petrovitch Zabolotny, the pride of the regiment. Brave as a lion, a veritable fiend with his sword! You won't find N.C.O.'s like him even if you search with a candle! Squadron commanders can take it easy when such a troop-sergeant is doing their work for them!"

Now—Zabolotny has just arrived in Moscow as a true servant of the Third International, a hanger on of Jews, a slave of the Devil. He has come with the

aureole of victories won over the Don Cossacks and Denikin, to urge before the War Council the necessity for more Red Cavalry, in order to stamp out of existence "that rabble of the White Guards,"—that very same rabble where three sons of mine serve, . . . fighting against Semion Petrovitch Zabolotny!

I met Zabolotny at the War Council. When the conference was over, it so happened that I was left alone with him in the room. His motor-car had not come and he stood looking out of the window, waiting for its arrival.

I went up to him and introduced myself: "I am Comrade Kusskoff," I said.

"Delighted to meet you. I am Comrade Zabolotny."

He wore a loose-fitting blouse of fine cloth with red braid and large red stars on one of his sleeves. He had grown stouter. His shaven, sunburnt and weather-beaten face was somewhat fuller. On his narrow Caucasian sword-belt hung a heavy bejewelled sword.

"You do not recognise me?" I said.

"Pardon me, comrade, I do not seem to remember you."

"It was the year before last,—in the valley of the Euphrates, . . .

*"From the borders of midnight to the distant noon*
*A king eagle descended on powerful wings,—*

doesn't that tell you anything Semion Petrovitch?"

Zabolotny frowned. With a piercing glance of his foxy moujik eyes he looked at me, somewhat in the manner of a bear, and murmured:

"Hem,—y-e-e-es. . . Much water has flown down the Euphrates since. So you, too, have been serving in the Caucasus?"

"I was Colonel of the M.... regiment there."

"A fine regiment. . . A splendid regiment. . . All regiments were fine then,—not the rabble we see nowadays."

"We had a Czar then," I said simply, and felt my blood run cold, for I realised that I was standing on a volcano. But Zabolotny understood and merely said:

"Yes. That is just the thing. There was order,—the soldiers respected their superiors."

"And now?"

"Did you hear my report?"

"I did."

"And do you know whom we serve?"

I did not reply to that.

"The Devil," said Zabolotny.

Involuntarily I started.

"You may be sure that it is so. But you had better come with me, I'll explain everything to a nicety. Let us go, here is my car."

I went.

He was staying at one of the best hotels of Moscow, but for all that it was in a terrible state of filth and neglect like everything else in those days. A young man showed signs of making up to Zabolotny, but he

shooed him away with an exclamation of impatience and said, turning round to me:

"That one, too, is a devil, or rather one of those possessed with a devil. It is that imp of a commissar of mine!"

Zabolotny rummaged in his kit-bag and produced a well-thumbed little volume.

"When I was in Turkey," he said, "this book was sent to me from Mount Athos. As you will notice it is one of the writings of Bishop Theophanus and is called 'Thoughts for Every Day of the Year or Lessons from the Word of God.' This very same Theophanus, so people say, was a man of great holiness, and many things that are hidden from man had been revealed to him. I have read this book, and it has taught me that many of our notions about nature and things natural that surround us are faulty. Scientists have found out what the substance of air is, but what they do not seem to know is that the air is saturated with malevolent agencies, that with every breath of air we breathe, we inhale the Devil, who takes hold of our thoughts and governs our deeds. Lately more than ever the demoniacal powers are playing the very devil with Russia and her people,—in fact, with everybody in the world. . . Man has grown weak in his prayers. Thence . . . pardon me, what is your name and patronymic?"

"Fedor Michailovitch."

"Thence, Fedor Michailovitch, comes this very same blight that has spread all over Russia. Look what

the holy man says here: 'Thursday of the fifth week in Lent. Before the fall of man are evil thoughts. Therefore, think not evil thoughts and you will not be liable to fall. Yet, what heeds man least of all? His thoughts. He suffers them to toss and tumble freely and does not give a thought to keeping them within bounds or diverting them to some useful purpose. And in the midst of this turmoil up comes the fiend and puts the seeds of evil into his heart, he entices man and disposes him to evil deeds. And thus man, all unwittingly to himself, grows ripe and ready for committing evil. All that remains to him is either to do the evil that is enshrined in his breast, or—fight. But alas!—scarcely anybody chooses to fight, and all are led, like slaves in fetters, to wickedness and evil deeds.'

"We have not fallen now, Fedor Michailovitch—we fell when we took the oath of allegiance to the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks are the consummation, but it was then that the thoughts of evil began, in November, 1916, when Miliukoff, Gutchkoff and Kerensky scattered the seeds of evil thoughts. They were allowed to run wild, and they brought about our downfall, the Bolsheviks, and ruin. Do you think that I, a sergeant of the old Imperial service, do not understand that it *is* ruin? And yet,—look at the masses of people that go to rack and ruin every day. Bishop Theophanus writes here: 'The air is full of demons, but they can do no harm to those who

pray and through their prayers become one with God and acquire strength by fasting and abstinence.'

"It was not only yesterday that our soldiers stopped being religious. One had to tell off special squads for divine service at church—nothing else would make them go. Our officers were just as bad. Except on red-letter days, scarcely any of them could be seen in church. And then, what was it they did first when the Provisional Government began to rule? Through their War Minister, Alexander Ivanovitch Gutchkoff, they abolished prayers at evening roll-call. . . They did away with the sacred ceremonial of our 'zaria',* that weapon that we had to fight the fiend. He got the army into his clutches. It became possessed of demons, —and now all of us are under the rule of demons."

"But how is it," I said, "that a man like you, Semion Petrovitch, with your perfect insight into things, has given in to the Devil?"

"Everybody has given in," he said curtly. "Look all round yourself. Is anybody of us still able to pray? And if he thinks he can he'd better not try, for soon enough will he be told a word or two that is sure to make him look up and forget his prayers and all."

"What are you going to do?"

"That is just what I wanted to ask you. You have had a better education, and you are older and more experienced, too, I believe. I have diagnosed our disease. I put it up to you to find a cure."

* *Zaria* means dawn and sunset and was the name of prayers sung in the Russian army immediately after evening roll-call.

Some sort of a new kind of academy has been set up here. They call it Proletcult, and it is meant to propagate culture among the proletariat. The word was given to professors, academicians, authors, scientists who had all been starving, and now, in exchange for food rations, for pittances of flour and fats, they have been made to lecture on all sorts of themes to workmen in workshops and to soldiers of the red army in barracks. From the point of view of instruction, these lectures are of no earthly use to anybody, although a considerable amount of energy and trouble is spent on them. It is quite impossible to organize any continuous series of lectures: they are made up at random, the audience is never the same, and its elements are promiscuous to a degree,—things that interest some of them bore others to death. Illiterates sit next to graduates of universities. It is obvious how difficult it must be to lecture to such a crowd. For advertising purposes, however, this scheme is a complete success. It is as if the thing were proclaiming from the very house-tops: "Take notice! with us, professors and academicians, authors and scientists are lecturing to common plebeians, to 'the great unwashed'!"

And the great unwashed have had their proper injunctions to be on their good behaviour and listen attentively, or else . . . there are special attendants and policemen. Slaps and smacks are lavishly dealt out to those who dare so much as to show signs of

dozing off or straying away from what they have been told to do.

Lectures of this kind have also been arranged in the division which I have got to lick into shape. A shrivelled up, scraggy little chap of a professor in a collarless shirt, without a tie, and in a greasy coat, is lecturing to the Red Army men about geology and geography. After the lecture proper is over, any of his audience may ask questions.

I have noticed that the Red Army men show the greatest interest in questions relating to the existence of soul, to the beyond, to what follows after death. They dare not touch on such subjects as God and religion, which might lead to their being put "against the wall."

At the end of a lecture they close in upon the professor and shower questions upon him.

Among them there is a man named Grishtchuk. He has come from the South front where he has seen death, executions and torture on a large scale. It is as if I still saw him standing before the professor unwashed, unkempt, all in a sweat, his pale face out of shape, as he sputtered incoherently:

"It makes me laugh. . . I have seen death. . . Don't care a damn. . . Bah! what is child-birth for? . . . courting? marrying? dancing and merrymaking at weddings? What? . . . when there is nothing but one end to it all. . . Full stop!"

I could see plainly on his stolid face how hard it was for him to express what was on his mind, and

I could not help thinking that if a dumb animal at the slaughter-house were given the power of speech it would utter something of a similar kind.

The professor did not understand what Grishtchuk meant to say, but the Red-Army men did, and a hubbub of voices arose as several of them began talking together.

"Life and death,—we see them every day, but why they are and what for, we do not understand."

"If there were such a thing as a soul, it would make itself known, sure enough!"

"Science has made great progress but it has not discovered the existence of the soul yet!"

"All rot and rubbish the priests want us to believe!"

"We have had enough of it! The priests and the czar have been keeping us in the dark on purpose, bloodsuckers that they are!"

The professor explained that there did exist a science that busied itself with the soul, although it did not belong to the exact sciences, that in England and in America there was a Society for Psychical Research which had as its aim to prove scientifically the existence of a Beyond and of supra- and infra-physical phenomena. The professor also told the men how the existence of the thing that had been given the name of "astral body," had been discovered, which, with some people, could separate itself from their natural body and materialize anywhere else.

"I cannot say that all this is strictly scientific," said the professor, "but I must state that, beside the world

we see with our eyes, there exists another one that is hidden from us. We are all surrounded by some kind of invisible beings which we inhale with every breath and which permeate our bodies."

"Miasmas," suggested one of the men.

"No, comrades; they are not miasmas, neither are they microbes,—they are a kind of deficient spirits. Science has given them the name of 'larvae' or 'elementals'. The theosophists assert that they are the souls of beings who had been human only in shape, the souls of criminals; or else some kind of precipitate or exudation of the thoughts and emotions, or even acts, of the wicked."

"Begad, fellows! Look at Grishtchuk! Doesn't he look just like one of those larvae?" cried one of the men.

Coarse laughter followed this sally, but immediately subsided. A timid voice enquired:

"What must I do, comrade, in order that the larvae do not get hold of me?"

"In order to save yourselves from the influence of larvae who, with a watchful eye, observe the doings of our soul, we must not think evil or do evil and seek protection of the pure spirits of light—our guardian angels," said the professor.

It came upon me with a shock. It was quite impossible to presume that Zabolotny and the professor could have laid their heads together as it was also impossible to think that the professor could have been reading the writings of Bishop Theophanus. And yet,

they both had, from opposite sides, arrived at the same result: demons exist, and the only means of getting rid of them is abstinence and prayer!

If anything, Moscow prayed in those days more than it had ever prayed before. Natasha, too, had given herself entirely to prayers, and for days at a stretch she did not leave the old church in our neighborhood. In vain. The more Moscow prayed, the more the forces of darkness gained on it. Blasphemy was incessant. It was glaring from the posters, from the newspapers and leaflets, poets and low-minded writers never tired of inventing new forms for it.

People had ceased to have qualms about joining the Bolsheviks, they went to serve them openly! On handbills, signboards, posters, monuments, on caps and sleeves the red pentagram was blazing, and there was no power strong enough to paralyse its influence.

And yet, I thought, there might have been one, if only I could have uttered with real faith: *In the name of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost,* the evil influence might have been brought to nought. But I was lacking in that faith!

I thought of talking to someone, and discussing with him all these questions about all these larvae and demons, the true meaning of the pentagram, this ill-wind that had come upon our country. I thought of joining forces with someone for the fight against the Devil and his underlings.

I decided to go and see Zabolotny. Whom else could

I have gone to? He was a Russian non-commissioned officer and knight of the order of St. George,—he must understand. He belonged to the orthodox church, and, so far as I could see, he was a true Russian.

I wanted to go to him and say: Away with the Jew Trotzky! Let us ask our august commander-in-chief, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaievitch to return to Russia. Let us abolish the pentagram and put in its place our orthodox eight-pointed cross. Let us stop being a Red Army and become a Russian army once more, orthodox warriors of Christ.

Let us do away with blasphemy, vice and foul language, curb all these poets and scribblers who have specialized in scoffing at God.

Let us demand it, saying in our hearts believingly: "In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost!"

Sombody has got to do it. Well, I and Zabolotny are going to take the first step.

Whilst I was waiting for Zabolotny's arrival, I was like one in a dream. At times I thought I was going mad, I had to keep myself under constant control in order not to give myself away before the commissar or my orderly, in order not to say anything inadvertently in the presence of the comrades in barracks.

At last he arrived.

It was the severe winter of 1918. We were feverishly preparing troops for the occupation of the Ukraine, which the Germans were evacuating. All

were stunned by the events in Germany. Madness had taken hold of the world. Germany was committing suicide on the eve of victory.

I found Zabolotny in a state of strange elation. One might have thought him drunk, but I knew he never touched intoxicants. He understood that I wanted to talk to him in private, and, dismissing his commissar with scant courtesy, he locked the door and said:

"I see, Fedor Michailovitch, you have something on your mind. Well, let us have a chat. . . The thing is getting serious, the world is full of its noise."

He listened attentively. But scarcely had I finished, when he broke into peals of coarse laughter.

"It is really cruel of you, Fedor Michailovitch! Begad! You have nearly made me die with laughter! Not enough to blame everything on the Jews or on the freemasons, here you come with your demons and those thingumbobs of your special invention,—larvae, you called them, didn't you? And what about yourself and me? We are the poor babes in the wood, I presume? Orthodox warriors of Christ, indeed! If you go on like this, you will end by demanding that we should have the Czar back again! . . . Am I not right?

"Have you ever thought, Fedor Michailovitch, how things would look if it could all be put back as if nothing at all had happened? Where would we be, miserable wretches that we are? The mere thought makes me laugh! Well then, let us suppose there never

had been such a thing as the great revolution and the Bolsheviks,—what should I be? N. C. O. Zabolotny, if you please. With the best of luck I might have got a commission. Well, Fedor Michailovitch, knowing the ways of our old army, don't you think I am right in saying that even as a recompense for my service, promotion to the rank of officer would have been a trying experience to me under the circumstances? To be given the cold shoulder at the officers' mess, to be patronized by any young cub of a Second Looey! Second Lieutenant Zabolotny . . . from the ranks. . . Why? Because, while the regular 2nd Looeys had been gallivanting about with the skirts, I had had my hands full of work looking after things in stables and barrack-rooms.

"Now, Fedor Michailovitch, I am a person of consequence. Thanks to whom? Thanks to the Jew Trotzky and Lenin, the diseased. They have my gratitude,—I'll stand up for them! Could anything like a reform of this kind be imaginable, if the Bolsheviks had not come into power? Now, when I am driving about most comfortably in a fine motor-car, with old General Rakhmatoff sitting next to me, all I hear from him to whatever I say, is—'As you please, comrade, as you wish, comrade'. Do you mean to say that there is a devil sitting within me?"

"There is," I answered.—"It is the spirit of lust of power."

"A fine spirit!" said Zabolotny. "I love it! . . . You ought to know better, Fedor Michailovitch. Do

you really think it was the Jews who desecrated the Church? The trouble with you is that you do not know us Russians. You have been at all sorts of schools, but what you don't seem to know is what kind of education our villagers get. You seem to think they have the same notions of God that you have. Nothing of the kind! It is all darkness there, in the village there is no God!

"I have been watching our Russians, and I have never been able to understand how they do the things they do. It means nothing to such a countryman of ours to come into the house of God with his cap on, smoking a cigarette. The air is foul with his cursing, he uses the bayonet of his rifle to drill a hole between the lips of the image of our Saviour, where he inserts his cigarette, he commits the vilest obscenities before the image of the Holy Virgin and goes away flushed and mightily pleased with himself, although rather shaky in the knees. Because, in his heart of hearts, he is a coward, Fedor Michailovitch, for all the bluster of his outward audacity,—he is a slave, an animal! He does not fear God, for the thunderbolt of God's wrath has not yet descended on anyone of them, but he does fear the Jews.

"Believe me, Fedor Michailovitch, he has never been half so much afraid of you, as he is of that Trotzky fellow, because Trotzky has never raised arguments about capital or corporal punishment. He simply says: 'To the wall!' or else 'A hiding to this varmint!' Demons! Jews! Freemasons! All rot and rubbish!

The only thing really to blame is that damned ignorance! I personally, Fedor Michailovitch, would have nothing to say against a Czar, but he would have to come without landlords and without generals, and he would have to say: 'Zabolotny, I dub you count with all your issue,—for, blackguard though you be, you are a chap to my liking'."

"But did you not, Semion Petrovitch, yourself give me to read what Bishop Theophanus writes about demons?"

"I did."

"How is it then that you have given in to the Devil?"

"Haven't *you?*"

"With me it is different. I have had special circumstances to consider."

"I have heard that. They all begin like that. With one it's his wife, with another—his children, and still another has got to save his aged parents. Well, all that is human and can be easily understood. All right. Let us say we all are under the influence of demons. But what if we are better off with them than without. The other day, for instance, I received some live sterlets from comrade Minin, and that, when people are starving everywhere. I wish you could see how the crowd behaves when I have to pass, for example, on the platform of a railway station. There always are crowds of all sorts of people there, workmen, hawkers, people half dead with hunger, dying people,—your fellow-officers, too, of course,—educated people, peasants; but no matter what they are, as soon as they

catch sight of me, a whisper, enthusiastic and fawning, spreads like wild-fire all over the place: 'There comes Zabolotny!' They would even go so far as to kiss my hands! Is it that they, too, are possessed with the Devil?"

"Yes, they are!"

"And still they pray to God, kneeling about in churches. Well, if I am a rogue, aren't they a thousand times worse? They are not worthy to lick my boots."

"They have been scared out of their wits by terror and executions. One must understand and forgive them."

"Scared. I like that. As if a handful of us communists could scare them. If they were not rogues they would rise."

"They have been trying to rise,—and what was the result? God will understand and forgive them, and so will history, but nobody will be able to understand us, and we shall not be forgiven."

"But what if we become penitent?" said Zabolotny, fixing me with a sly look in his mouzhik eyes. They looked more than ever like those of a bear.

"No tears will ever wash off our sin, Semion Petrovitch."

"Tears,—no, but what if we do it with blood?"

"What blood?" I exclaimed.

Zabolotny leant towards me, and putting his face close to mine he looked straight into my eyes.

"With that of the Jews," he said.

Blood and carnage everywhere. Rivers of blood on the fronts where fighting with Koltchak, the Cossacks of the Don, Denikin, the Ukrainians rages; blood, too, flowing in the torture chambers of the Chekas, in courtyards, in outhouses, in the squares and streets of towns. Yesterday the Red-Army men raided the market, hunting for "bagmen" with their illicit goods, and one of the soldiers, for no reason whatever, merely out of wantonness, killed a woman. And there the matter ended. Nobody got excited about it, nobody even so much as thought to inquire into the incident, for such happenings have become "incidents" nowadays.

Moscow has changed beyond recognition. Drifts of snow with narrow trodden paths, icicles three yards long, broken down wooden fences with nearly all the palings gone for fire-wood, half demolished houses. All over the town the iron smoke-escape pipes of the "burjuika" stoves have been led through windows, and now are vomiting volumes of smoke in glorification of the Third International. The water supply system has broken down, but the frost is holding the miasmas in its grip, and the garbage heaps of the courtyards are somewhat less offensive. Lanes and by-streets have been turned into public lavatories, used freely by both sexes alike, and nobody cares! Moscow must have looked something like this in Czar Ivan's time.

The blue of the bright, yet mellow, sky shines like brocade. The frost has put some colour into the pale

and haggard faces of women and children. All the streets are crowded with people in tatters, children are running about, there is a constant coming and going of Soviet officials, queues are forming at the places of distribution of food and fuel. A mockery of life and action amidst mere skeletons of houses; underfoot the slowly moving pageant of death!

But, for all that, Moscow is still beautiful. Gold and purple glows in the mother-of-pearl and enamel of the cupolas of the Cathedral of Vassili Blajenny. The frost envelops like dainty lace the chipped and battered walls of the Kremlin. The belfry of Ivan the Great soars gleaming in the vast azure of the sky, and what does this white giant care if Lenin and his satellites welter at its feet? It has seen times more dire than these. It remembers cauldrons with human flesh in the squares of Moscow, it remembers hordes of other despoilers, it remembers the Poles, the French and horses stabled in the Cathedral of the Assumption.

And Moscow, the golden-domed, seems to say: "Everything passes."

I had a conversation with my commissar. He is a young man;—he had just graduated from one of the universities when the revolution broke out. He is proud of his present position. He reads a great deal, he wants to master everything by himself, to become what the English call "a self-made man." We talked about the Jews. My commissar is a Russian, he comes of a good family of the South of Russia.

"It is a good thing that the Jews have been given equality of rights," he said. "It must be so,—Russian people must learn to fight and win through."

And on his face it was plainly written: "as I do."

"England, America and France have proved the truth of it: there, equality of rights has brought about nobility of competition which, in its turn, serves to produce strong characters that are lacking in Russia."

"But don't you,—knowing the flabbiness of the Slav character and the unpreparedness of the people for any kind of struggle, owing to their always having been held in leading strings by the Government, don't you think that there is danger that the Jews might win complete victory over the Russians? As it is, three-fourths of the leading posts are already in their hands."

"That is quite natural, it could not be otherwise. The Jews have been oppressed in Russia for so many years that, having won power at last, they now want to enjoy it to the full."

"I am afraid that their enjoying it will be rather a costly affair for Russia."

"There you are again with that Russia of yours," said the commissar, laying his manicured hand on mine. "Cannot you really forget?"

"Forget what?"

"Everything. All that belongs to the past. Can't you understand that we must train ourselves to new modes of thinking, feeling and acting as if there never had been such a thing as a past. I was born in 1899; and up to that time, or rather up to October 25th,

1917, there has never been anything. To hell with history. There never was such a person as Peter the Great, or Napoleon, or Makovsky, or Avaizovsky, or anybody else. No heroes. We are the heroes, and that only for to-day and not for to-morrow. Have you ever seen anything like our creative powers, our proletarian art?"

"Cubes and pyramids. Tasteless combinations of red with white and yellow. Heavy heathenish temples and the smell of corpses. No, thanks very much, I should prefer something else."

"That is because of your out-of-date æsthetics. You'll get used to the new tendencies and learn to like them."

We were passing the church of Christ the Saviour. Its white bulk, crowned with cupolas of gold, rose light and ethereal against the blue sky.

"Well," I said, pointing at the church, "can you deny that this is beauty and not lie?"

The commissar screwed up his eyes and peered at it critically.

"Looks too much of an autocrat to suit me. . . We are going to build something better than that."

Imperial Eagles and the head of Alexander III from his demolished monument were lying about in the snow. A swarm of crows rose from the debris and flew away, tracing zig-zag lines of black on the canopy of the sky.

"Going to build, are you?" I thought. "Past mas-

ters in breaking up and destroying that you are, what can you do when it comes to creating things?"

But I said nothing. It is useless to speak. And then, it was risky enough as it was, with my head and Natasha's life at stake.

However, I must say there is something new that is a distinct creation of theirs. It is this peculiar soviet mode of life which I have occasion to watch at Lipotchka's house.

The people of the younger generation seem to be quite happy. Masha and Lena have always something or other to whisper about to each other in private, and whenever one chances upon them unawares, they fly apart in confusion. In the evenings, they go to cinemas, theatres and, most of all, dance-halls. An endless number of the latter have shot up, bearing the names of Karl Marx, Liebknecht, Rosa Luxembourg and many others, as familiar and no less "Russian". But, whatever their individual names may be, they commonly go by their generic name of *tantsoulkas.* They dance modern dances: they fox-trot, they one-step, and their dancing partners, too, are modern,—sailors and "tchekists". Andrew, with the face of a gutter-snipe, goes about thieving whatever and wherever he can and does not care a damn, for he is the brother of a "sodkum," a commissar's mistress, and he knows very well that this is more than enough to protect him from trouble. News has been received that his eldest

brother, Benedict, has been killed in action, fighting against the Reds with Denikin.

And the centre round which this precious specimen of a family gyrates is Lipotchka, all run down and worn to a shadow. She is always selling one thing after another and whatever she gets for the proceeds of her sales, potatoes, rice, an occasional bit of meat or coarse flour, she carries home herself on her shoulders. And when she sits before the burning "burjuika" in the evenings, trying to contrive a meal, one cannot look at her sunken eyes without a shudder.

The Lord will forgive her. . .

He will forgive the ruin of her sons, the immorality of her daughters, her non-resistance to evil. She was not given so much as a chance of making a stand,—she had been broken by life at the very outset and was carried downstream ever after. She never was meant to fight.

"To-day, Fedia," she says in a feeble voice, "I have been lucky enough to barter some of our things for two pounds of potatoes. I chanced upon decent people who did not cheat. Somehow we'll manage to tide over the winter, and by that time, God willing, we'll have broken Denikin and the Cossacks, and bread will be plenty again."

She pays no heed to the fact that three sons of mine, Sviatoslav, Igor and Oleg, are with Denikin, and that my daughter Lisa has taken refuge with the Cossacks. She must have her bread even if getting

it should be brought through the martyrdom of my children.

"Fedia, please, can't you get me some real coffee and some sugar? I sometimes would give anything for a drop of coffee!"

"Certainly, darling Lipotchka; you shall have it as soon as I can manage to get some."

The burjuika goes on filling the air with smoke. We sit in the dark room in silence.

Late in the evening Benedict Benedictovitch comes home from his work. There is no trace left of his former high spirits.

"Have you brought anything?" asks Lipotchka.

"Nothing much to get excited about. A measly two pounds of that vile fish, vobla, and that is all."

"How are you getting on with your work?" I ask.

"Work? As if what we are doing deserves to be called work! We are busy enough sending off and receiving postal matters by rail. But where there are no trains there is no mail either. The post horses on the highway routes have either been requisitioned, simply stolen, or have died of hunger. So you see, there does not even exist such a thing as a mail service. Do you remember the old times in Djarkent? There was no railway, but wasn't it fine to see the mail come into town in five troikas, their bells ringing merrily? But, for all that, what is there to send? Who thinks of writing letters nowadays? The only mails we carry are government correspondence and bales of "Pravdas" and "Izvestias." It's mere humbug, but not work.

However, can you say that what you are doing is productive work?"

I have been asking myself this question over and over again.

One of the reasons why I went to serve with them, apart from the necessity of saving Natasha from suffering too terrible for words, was the wish of bringing the Red Army back to God-fearing ways, of inducing the men to care for Russia and her glorious past and serve their country and not the Third International.

In this I was holding fast to the tenets which had been religiously observed by us officers of the old Imperial Army. With the task of converting recruits into soldiers and welding soldiers into an army, we used to deal in four stages, the first of which was to hammer off the dross of indolence and blackguardism that so often overlies the sterling qualities of our Russian character. Drill and gymnastics, unrelenting persistence in enforcing discipline, orderliness and regularity, would each contribute its share in shaping our men into efficient pieces of machinery, blindly and implicitly obeying the slightest wish of their superiors. Another distinctly separate item of our training program was the second stage—that of educating our soldiers in the precepts of our orthodox faith, loyalty to the Czar and love of their country. They were taught to hold sacred the colours of their regiment which bore the symbols of this trinity of their military creed. Attendance at divine service, talks delivered by the of-

ficers on the history of Russia and that of the regiment, would minister to the needs of their spiritual welfare and train them to take pride in the glorious past of their country and the traditions of their regiment. Music, singing and ceremonials were most useful in achieving our ends, as also were the ideals of medieval knighthood which we held before the eyes of our men. Rifle drill, fencing and rifle practice came next, and made our men skilled at arms, and manoeuvring in the field in companies, battalions and larger units was the last stage of our program.

Graphically, this work of ours could be represented as a square the sides of which, corresponding each to one of the separate stages of our training program, would join up into a contained whole.

The result was our great Russian warrior-soldier; the pride of his country in all ages.

This soldier whom we had so painstakingly created, had gone down fighting for the common cause in the struggle against the militarism of Germany.

The Red Army man is a soldier of a new type. Even those few of the earlier levies, who now serve in the ranks of the Red Army, have not passed a full course of training. But they have gone through the War and, paradoxical as it may sound, war spoils a soldier. It turns him into a marauder and makes him lax in discipline. The men we, the Red Officers, have to deal with, are either old soldiers, corrupted by the War, or else young men levied from the villages, equally tainted by the War.

The high command of the Red Army does not favour anything that, even remotely, would resemble the old system of training. The idea of a contained square does not exist with them. They have drawn it out into a thin line which is all drill and nothing but drill.

Asked or unasked, competent or not—they were all at it, all were drilling and ragging soldiers, emphasizing their efforts with slaps on the face, beatings with rifle butts and ramrods and shootings by the dozen.

Instead of educating their soldiers, they had been demoralising them by punitive expeditions, civil war, unrestricted freedom in frequenting dance halls, service with the Cheka, where there were no limits to licentiousness.

They did not want their soldiers to be taught to use their arms, or know how to manoeuvre in the field. For that purpose, they would have had to give the Red Army men to us, the old officers; and they did not trust us. They were afraid that an army skilled in arms might beat not only Denikin, but also the Soviet authorities into the bargain.

The Red Army was not at all adequate to the requirements of a great country like Russia. It could go to war with defenceless peasants and workmen, it could fight the badly armed students and cadets of Denikin's army, but they knew that with such an army they never could successfully oppose any regular, well trained, educated and properly organised forces. And this knowledge created perpetual fear, of the Germans,

at first, and then of the Entente, of the Czecho-Slovaks, the Finns, the Esthonians, the Poles, all of whom could do as they liked without the Soviet being able to reply with any serious measures of a military character. For, what was called the Red Army, was in a perpetual state of reorganisation, its numbers fluctuated from day to day; the names of its units were continuously altered and its groupings changed like the figures of a kaleidoscope. Whatever they did, it did not create an army. It may be that it was not their plan to have an army at all.

Moreover,—the soldiers were starving, and it was quite impossible to have any influence over a hungry crowd that was demoralised to the core. I have been serving in the Red Army a whole year, and yet I have not been able to do anything toward changing its character.

So the corner stone of my vindication of serving with the Bolsheviks, namely, that I was doing it for the sake of an idea, was dashed to the ground.

There still remained the reason of my doing it for Natasha's sake.

Her attitude towards me has not changed,—she does not speak to me. She talks to Lipotchka, to Benedict Benedictovitch, she tries to bring our youngest niece, Lena, back to good ways and rectitude,—but she never addresses a word to me.

She does not understand me.

We live in the same flat, but we are strangers to

each other, and that—after we have been living in perfect harmony for twenty-five years!

She never speaks to the commissar either. She gives her orders to the orderly in a curt manner that suffers no retort, and even that happens only seldom. As a rule she does everything herself.

There is a piano in the flat, but she never touches it. Her only joy is going to church.

It seems as if her bodily substance had all gone from her. Her eyes are like two burning torches, like stars in the pale evening sky; her hair has become white, but it does not make her look old—on the contrary, her fresh complexion, in contrast to her white hair, makes her look younger than ever. She looks like a porcelain marquise, like a water-colour of the 18th century.

Life passes by her,—a wayfarer on the road.

And what a life it is!

A cabaret, licensed by the people's commissars, has been opened in the town house of Princess Bielopiensky. Small tables, wine, cakes, patties, *hors d'oeuvres*, half-naked ladies of Moscow's new élite society, diamonds, pearls, and a crowd of uncouth tchekists, sailors and Jews. . . They are the only people who can afford to pay, with their blood-stained millions, for the splendors of an aristocratic drawing-room.

People are being shot on the Lubianka.

Fratricidal war on all fronts . . . and, along with this,—the cabaret of Princess Bielopiensky!

They call her "ex-Princess,"—but Princess, nevertheless!

Are we living in a madhouse?

Natasha, dressed in black, returns home from matins. On her way she meets groups of prisoners being led to execution and, further on, the noisy crowd of Princess Bielopiensky's patrons leaving after another night of carousal. Scenes like these are common every day features of life in Soviet Russia.

The theatres are busily staging new plays, the ballet is flourishing more than ever, and the ballerinas have become mistresses of the proletariat. Music, singing, ringing voices everywhere, but nothing can drown the moans of the dying, the curses of the condemned.

Two days running, the whole of the Taganka prison was howling and caterwauling, it was the only means left to the prisoners of raising their voices in protest against the powers that be.

Their howls could be heard in the streets, and the Red Army men were hard at it, dispersing the curious crowds attracted by the noise.

Natasha sees, she knows and does not blame me. But she does not understand me!

Neither do I.

What am I to do? What can I do? Run away? Run in a straight line, as the crow flies, to Denikin, to Poland, to Finland?

But what is to become of Natasha?

All my movements are being secretly watched.

At night, when I am in bed, the door opens noiselessly, and the commissar, in night attire, looks in to make sure that I am still there. Natasha, Lipotchka, Benedict Benedictovitch, they are all registered, being relations of a Red Army officer. The least indiscreet action on my part,—and they all would have to answer for it with torture and death.

I often see that Lipotchka is secretly watching me when she thinks I do not notice it. It is as if she would like to find out what is in my mind, whether she could be sure that I am not going to run away or become unloyal to the Soviets. For, in such a case she, being my sister, would be arrested, too.

The other day, the commissar asked me:

"Where are your sons, Sviatoslav, Igor and Oleg and your daughter Elisabeth?"

I did not answer.

"With Denikin, I presume," he went on. "Well, if you are fortunate enough, they may already have been killed. There have been heavy losses there lately, especially in officers."

I did not answer anything to that either.

Well, then, let me be shot and have done with it! Natasha, darling, pass sentence on me. By letting your hair grow white God wishes to mark the chastity of your soul.

I am all black. I have sold my soul to the devil. But what for, for whose sake did I do it?

I wish I could come to you, Natasha darling, and tell you all as of old. I would cross myself and say:

"In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, hear me out."

But then, how can I do it? What if she says: "Better torture and physical pain to me and death—than that your soul should be doomed to eternal torment!"

And I know,—that is just what she would say.

No! I dare not make her take the road of passion.

I keep silent . . . I serve. . .

Oh God, how I suffer!

I asked to be sent to the Polish front. I thought that there I should have at least the illusion of defending my country. There, standing somewhere on the Styx, I might force myself to believe that I was keeping watch for Russia the Great, Russia the Powerful.

The President of the Revolutionary War Council grinned at me impudently when I put forward my application. He looked at me with his yellow eyes that shone with spite through his pince-nez. He read my mind as if it were an open book and understood at once what my motives were.

"Tired of Moscow? Well, comrade, I can understand it. You are a fighting general. War is your element. Your request shall be granted,—most certainly it shall. I fully appreciate your zeal!

And now they have sent me to the south front, to the Ukraine.

There, where my sons must be.

It may be that I am "in luck," and that they are dead by now!

The commissar is right. Fortunate indeed is he whose sons have been killed in the war.

On this, the diary of Fedor Michailovitch Kusskoff stopped short.

# PART TWO

## I.

A BOY of nineteen,—tall, handsome and well built, conscious of his strength and personal magnetism, eager to enjoy life,—is apt to find it bright and attractive even in the dark and troubled times of revolution. Bloodshed, executions and tortures, all the horrors he sees about him, are to him but poignant details of an interesting period which God has ordained him to witness.

Thus it was with Igor—familiarly called Igrunka—second son of Fedor Michailovitch Kusskoff, at the beginning of the revolution.

He was a splendid young fellow, blue-eyed and fair-haired, with delicately chiselled features and an obstinate jaw, resembling his father in his days as a cadet. He seemed born to wear a handsome uniform, to flirt with women and be adored by them.

Igrunka was well aware of his own worth and good fortune. On October 1, 1916, six months before the revolution, he wrote in his diary:

"To-day I am leaving the School of Military Cadets. Life throws its doors wide open before me, and I proudly cross its threshold, wearing the handsome uniform of the Nicholas Cavalry School."

A hurried course of studies . . . a throng of gay, high-spirited schoolfellows . . . horses, stables, and dreams of heroic deeds and military glory, of the beauty and poetry of war. Its horrors had no room in their stout young hearts. All their eyes would see were the pretty nurses, they did not notice the wounded in the hospitals,—being wounded to them was tantamount to a thrilling passage in an exciting novel. In a year's time, a commission in "Dolokhoff's" regiment, the red dolman and the pelisse "woven of clouds" of an officer of the Tchernobylsky Hussars, were the dreams of Igrunka's ambition.

On leave, in his mother's flat on the Offitzerskaia, where he met his brother Oleg and his sister Lisa, they would all sit round the lamp and he would read Count Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" to them, relating the great patriotic war of 1812 and the prowess of *Vasska Denissoff, Dorokhoff* and the rest.

Life in the capital was growing more and more feverish and troubled. Everybody's nerves were strained to the utmost. The buzz of gossip wove the net that was to strangle the Imperial Family. There were endless speeches at the Duma. The microbe of idle talk had infected everyone. The leaders of the "Cadets" of the constitutional Democratic party, and of the Socialists lied and slandered in their eagerness to seize the helm of the State.

Igrunka Kusskoff took little heed of it all. He hardly knew the names of these leaders. He never read the papers—what had he to do with politics?

All they knew or cared about in their smart squadron was drill, and the observance of the traditions of their glorious Cavalry School.

The world war ran its course. His father had been wounded and had remained with his regiment. His eldest brother, Svietik, also wounded, lay in a field hospital. The war seemed full of romantic episodes which fired his imagination. Everyone seemed anxious to take part in it, and no one had a premonition of the bitter class struggle that was so soon to follow.

Igrunka, whose thoughts were full of the new uniform he was going to wear, of the troop of hussars he was going to command, took no notice of the peculiar attitude of his orderly, Lazurzchenko, who scarcely listened to his orders when he saddled his horse, "Grenadier." He did not notice that the stirrups and bit were by no means as bright as they ought to be and that the horses of the squadron were far from being well groomed.

He thought to himself, as he listened to the sharp reprimands of Colonel Lévénetz, his idol, the best horseman of the school: "How well that rasping voice of his sounds. I must copy it when I order my soldiers about."

In the evening, one could hear, in the passage, the pupil Cossacks singing their heart-rending songs:

"The Cossacks are merrily whistling as they go out to fight . . .
"Marussia is bitterly crying all alone in the night . . ."

Igrunka hastened to his squadron, clanking his spurs; he took a guitar, while a group of young men gathered around him, and sang in deep tones, imitating the Tsiganes:

"I am downcast and sad . . . all my hopes are gone . . ."

Young, velvety voices joined in the song:

"Be silent, my heart, leave the old wounds alone . . ."

Ghiga Vorotynsky's voice rose, covering all the other voices, and died away.

Beyond the window, Igrunka could see the setting December sun and the streets of the capital lying under their sheet of snow. He thought of the approaching Christmas Holidays . . . of his mother . . . of their cat Topy . . . of Oleg and Lisa . . . of the ballet "Gisele" at the Imperial Theatre Marie, and the "Arragonskaia Khota,"—Glinka's Spanish Jota,—danced by Taniusha Loskutova. She was in love with Igrunka . . . well, and what if she was?

Natasha had not brought up her sons as strictly as her mother-in-law, Varvara Sergueievna, had brought up their father. Times were different. Igrunka was left free to do as he liked, as long as the honor of his name and that of his uniform were safe. He dared not get into debt or gamble, because his father was not rich and only had his pay to live on. But, as to flirting with a pretty ballet-dancer . . .

well, why shouldn't he? It did not hinder him from loving Kotik Ojoguin's,—his closest friend and schoolfellow's,—sister Maia. He might even admire someone else. These were different things altogether.

The microbe of anarchy floated in the air and infected the young people.

The news of Rasputin's murder reached the school. Some said they were right in killing him. Others held that no one had a right to meddle with the Emperor's private life.

Igrunka and his friends, however, had other things to think about. They had just ordered their uniforms at the famous military tailor's, Kaplan. Would he turn them out well? Would they be allowed to wear full uniform in war time? Would the war be ended by the autumn, or would they still be able to take part in it? Would they get leave after their promotion? All this interested them far more than the hubbub about Rasputin.

They were young, ardent, and full of enthusiasm, energy and courage. The revolution came upon them as a bitter surprise. It set the school on fire. Colonel Lévénetz, who was in command of Igrunka's squadron, was killed under his very eyes. The orderlies were in full rebellion. But their mutiny was like a fire in the steppe, which does not burn the young grass, but only singes and scorches it. Its flame did not consume these young men, but it called forth in them a feeling of bitterness and distrust in regard to the men.

Then came the camp, practical work in the

field, . . . flirting with the pretty girls of the neighbourhood. . . The scorched, down-trodden grass began to show signs of life, and green blades grew again. It wanted to live, . . . in spite of everything.

## II.

Igrunka Kusskoff and Kotik Ojoguin had got their commissions. They had obtained a fortnight's leave before joining their regiment, and were now on their way to spend it with the Ojoguins, on the latter's estate in the government of Kharkoff. They travelled second-class. Igrunka wore his gold-braided scarlet dolman and sword under his rough soldier's overcoat. The passages were crowded with soldiers sitting on their packs or lying on the floor. Igrunka would have liked to talk to them, but their manner was far from engaging. They looked more like foreigners than Russian soldiers. When Igrunka stepped out into the passage, they cast dull, evil glances at the young officer without rising to make way for him, and went on spitting on the floor the husks of the sun-flower seeds they were munching.*

Both young men felt ill at ease; the atmosphere was heavy and oppressive. In the evening, the guard lighted a thick candle in the lantern that hung in their compartment. Night was setting in, and the wide steppe was almost invisible. Igrunka stepped out into

* Soldiers were not allowed to eat sun-flower seeds in public before the revolution, but after it broke out, all the streets and floors in trams and railway-carriages were littered with them.

the passage. There was no light there. Two soldiers were standing close to the curtainless window, their faces pressed against the window-panes, peering into the darkness.

"All this, comrade," said one of them, a dark-haired artilleryman with a swarthy complexion, pointing to the limitless space beyond, "is the region of black earth. I know this part of the country well. Thirty versts from here lie the vast estates devoted to horse-breeding. There are at least sixteen déssiatins to each horse."

"And a peasant has to be content with two," said the other man with a sigh. He was an infantryman, thick-set and short, with shaggy yellow hair and a red neck. "They care more for their horses than for the peasants."

"These studs have existed since the time of the Empress Catherine II," said the artilleryman. "There are hundreds of stallions, mares, and colts, and the peasant villages are very much like those of the former serfs. There was a land-agent named Raben, who used to dishonour all the peasant girls."

"And what did the peasants do?"

"They did not retaliate—they are a passive, ignorant lot. All our misfortunes come from the priests and the landowners."

"I should like to strangle them with my own hands."

"Patience. We shall strangle them yet, all of them. Aren't we free to do so now? Liberty has been proclaimed."

"Sixteen déssiatins to a horse!"

"Further on are the Cossacks of the Don. They also have more land than they know what to do with . . . and herds of horses, five to six thousand, and thousands of sheep. And they still manage to complain! The big Cossack landowners possess five to ten thousand déssiatins of land."

"A nice state of things, indeed!" said the little soldier in a hoarse voice. He had long, straight hair, and a brick-red face covered with freckles. He drew a tobacco-pouch from his pocket, spat out some sunflower seeds, rolled a cigarette and began to smoke it with relish.

"It is time for us to act," said he in a thoughtful voice. "We must stop fighting at the front and see that justice reigns on this earth. We must begin by strangling the big landowners and all their accursed race. Wipe it out clean. Nothing must be left of it."

"We must exterminate them with machine-guns," the artilleryman chimed in. "Pull them out by the roots."

"And the priests as well! Religion must be abolished. It appears that religion does not exist abroad, and that that is the reason why everyone is happy. Afterwards—we must attack the Cossacks."

"Of course. The Cossacks are like the rich landowners,—they stand up for their possessions."

"But why harm the Cossacks? After all, they are peasants like we are."

"Peasants! . . . they have twelve déssiatins each

and sometimes more, and they have, moreover, a right to the land of the commune. They are gorged with land—the Cossacks!"

"Yes, they must be done away with—like the rest. They only care for galloping and shouting. The Cossacks and the rich landowners are one and the same thing."

"They must be strangled,—the brutes! It will give us more space. . ."

"Afterwards, the land must be honestly divided. Everyone must have at least a hundred déssiatins to his share. The forests of the State can be cut down to build houses. We can do as we like, now that there is no Czar. The Czar held everything in hand, but at present everything is going to bits, and we must pick up what we can."

"Have you a family at home, Vassia?"—asked the artillery man.

"A wife, who is only fit to wash dirty dishes, and a daughter, a chit of a girl, twelve years old. But I am tired of my wife, I want a change. I have found a handsome girl in town; she sticks to me like honey."

"And what will you do with your own?"

"She can go to the devil! Life is beginning again; we are turning over a new leaf, and I want a new wife."

"Well, well!" said the artilleryman, shaking his head. "Are you going home on leave, Vassia?"

"Nay, I am returning for good to the village. We have done with the regiment. We decided to shoot the

Colonel, but the committee took his part. So we elected another committee. The Colonel was brought before us. He was trembling like a leaf. 'Ah . . . you made us tremble when you threatened us with your revolver, forcing us to attack the enemy . . . and now . . . it is you who are cowed, you cur!' We placed him facing a wooden fence in the village. The women, girls and children had trooped together to watch the scene. Grunka, . . . the dark one, . . . a bold lass, . . . cried out to us: 'Why, comrades, are you only going to thrash him? You must torture him and drink your fill of his blood.' We called the committee. . ."

The soldier stopped speaking and drew out his tobacco-pouch.

"Well?"

He remained silent for a moment. Then he said, in a brief, low voice:

"We tortured him to death . . . it lasted an hour and a half."

"Yes," said the artilleryman, yawning and stretching himself; "there is much to do at present. There are also the military cadets. . ."

"They are all the same," said the little soldier with a laugh. "Sons of dogs,—all of them. We must strangle them while we have the means of doing it."

Igrunka had been standing at the door leading into the passage, and had overheard every word of the conversation. Kotik was peacefully asleep on his upper berth. There were two other travellers in the

compartment, a merchant from Moscow and a stout, pasty-looking lady, a landowner of the government of Penza. She had admired the handsome young officer in the morning, and had treated him to some home-made cakes.

"So this is how they feel!" he said to himself. "We thought, when they killed Colonel Lévénetz, that it was only a flash in the pan. We were wrong; it is organized. They want to equalize everything. Uncle Hippolytus and Aunt Azalea used to say that all men were equal. I remember asking my mother one day if this were possible, and she answered: 'It can never be. God created the world with its towering, snowy peaks, its hillocks, its valleys, steppes and plains. God did not make everything on a level. Death alone is the great leveller'. . . But what do we know of it after all? They want to abolish God and religion, but they must destroy the mountains as well—and turn the world into a sandy desert, a monotonous plain . . . and a grave."

## III.

Igrunka and Kotik got out at a small country station.

Beyond it, the scorched, brown steppe undulated gently upwards, abruptly broke into chalk-pits and faded into the blue distance. In the west the sky was aflame. A red, blood-shot sun was slowly setting on the horizon.

A large, old-fashioned victoria, drawn by a pair of vigorous bays, drove up to the station.

"Good evening, Stépan," said Kotik.

"Good evening, barin. I had ceased to expect you to-day. The train is late," said the coachman, who wore a "poddevka"* and a peaked cap.

"Why did you not bring the troika?"

"Almost all of the horses have been mobilized. There is a second levy. Stallions and colts alone are left."

"How is everybody at home?"

"They are all quite well. The barynia is expecting you. The young ladies would have liked to meet you on horseback, but there are no horses to ride."

"What, have they taken 'Lastochka' and 'Janina'?"

* A kind of sleeveless overcoat, reaching to the knee, fastened at the side and pleated at the back. They are generally made of velveteen, or of cloth, and are at present worn only by coachmen.

"They have taken everything. The stables are empty."

They drove for a little time along the paved road, but soon the victoria left it and rolled on the soft, dusty ground, for Russian coachmen prefer unpaved roads. The limitless steppe stretched in front of them. Low hillocks rose to the right, crowned with windmills, whose wings were still. The clear evening sky was darkening, taking on a greenish hue. A solitary star twinkled high up. A warm breeze ran through the steppe, bringing with it a whiff of wormwood and mint, of black earth and burnt straw, mingled with the healthy, vivifying smell of tar, leather, horse's sweat and "makhorka"—the peasants' tobacco. The incomparable, indescribable fragrance of a Russian summer night accompanied the young men on their drive, thrilling their hearts with familiar impressions. They felt comforted and happy.

"There is nothing, anywhere, like the aroma of the Russian steppe," said Kotik.

"In South America, may be?" suggested Igrunka.

"In distant, ardent Argentina . . ." hummed Kotik.

"Doesn't this make you think of Taniusha Loskutova, Igrunka?"

"For Heaven's sake, don't mention her before your sisters!" exclaimed the latter.

"How beautifully she played the piano the other day! She loves you, Igrunka, and you play with her like a cat with a mouse!"

"She is young, she will forget."

"In distant, ardent Argentina . . ." once more sang Kotik, and then suddenly grew silent.

The evening light was fading in the sky. Stars appeared, one by one. Nature was celebrating a sweet mystery, as it did every night, and every night it was indescribably beautiful. The Milky Way stretched across the sky like a silvery ribbon. The Pleiades trembled underneath. The common people had given them the appellation of "Volossojar"—Burning Hair. The astronomers had noted every star, they had given each of them a name and marked them on the astronomical calendar. But the common people had also noted them, they had christened them with their own names and had put them down on the saints' calendar.

The moon shed its light on the road; blue shadows ran along the ground. The distant horizon was like sapphire-blue crystal.

A strange figure seemed to be advancing towards them. A man—or a werewolf? Or was it the "Léshy" —old Nick—himself? An enormous head on a weirdly thin neck, garments trailing in fantastical zigzags on the ground. He shook his head and made his way straight to the carriage. Igrunka had scarcely had time to realize what it was, when an enormous thistle brushed past them and disappeared.

Now, it was a hill, or a house that loomed in the distance. But when they came near it, it turned out to be a haystack. A smell of ripe corn and straw floated upon the air.

The night and the steppe blended in a sweet dream, both as beautiful as Russia herself.

"It is lovely . . ." sighed Igrunka.

"Wait a bit," said Kotik, "and you will like it better still. We have a garden of twenty déssiatins, my friend. Our poplars are so tall that looking up you cannot see their tops—without overbalancing."

"I could never leave Russia," said Igrunka. "I wouldn't exchange it for the most beautiful country in the world."

"In distant, ardent Argentina . . ." sang Kotik.

"The Devil take Argentina! We are in the government of Kharkoff!" exclaimed Igrunka.

A fresh breeze blew into their face, followed by a sudden current of warm air, impregnated with the smell of hay and morass.

Stépan turned to them, pointing with his whip to the right.

"Yesterday, as I was going out to meet you," he said, "the sky over there was red with the reflection of a big fire. The manor house of Constantinovka was burning. One can't see anything at present. It must have burnt to the ground."

"What was the cause of the fire?" inquired Kotik.

"The peasants set fire to the house. Awful things happened there."

He grew silent.

Igrunka could not help thinking of the soldier's words in the railway carriage: "Yes, there is much to do at present."

A dog barked somewhere in the distance. There was a fresh whiff of warm air, the road seemed to be abruptly descending into a ravine. Yellow lights trembled at the bottom of it, reflected in the sleeping waters of a pond, under the willows and rushes.

The road was once more ascending, they were crossing a dyke, a wild duck flew up, flapping its wings, and disappeared in the blue sky.

They drove through the village. The whitewashed houses under their thatched roofs seemed to stand, enchanted, in the silver moonlight. There was a strong smell of smoke, of manure, of sheep and baked bread.

"Stépan, how do our peasants behave?" inquired Kotik.

"Our peasants? We cannot complain of them. They respect their masters. Some apples have been stolen, but that is all there is to say at present."

The carriage turned to the right, driving through a thick grove of shrubs, and entered an avenue. They could hear the wheels crunching the gravel. A long, grey house with a wide flight of steps and two tall, glittering windows, stood out in the rays of the moon.

"They are expecting us," said Kotik. "There are lights in the dining-room."

The horses made a last effort and stopped short. A row of white columns covered with Virginia creeper appeared before Igrunka, and he felt like the hero of some fairy tale, suddenly transported into an enchanted kingdom, the Kingdom of the Sleeping Beauty.

## IV.

They went up the wide, shallow steps leading to the verandah. The moon peeped through the thick foliage of the Virginia creeper, throwing fantastic shadows and weaving an intricate design on a long table, covered with a cloth, with a bowl of yellow chrysanthemums in the middle. Two tall windows and a glass-door, with drawn blinds, cast a dull light, which blended with that of the moon, upon the verandah and the table.

The silence and stillness of the night were broken by the sounds of their arrival. The horses snorted and sniffed, as though wishing to say: "Here we are! Home at last!"

A light moved behind the window, voices were heard, the door opened, and a tall girl, dressed in a white skirt and blouse, appeared on the threshold, holding a lamp with a blue shade on a level with her head. She was fair, with soft, fluffy locks of unruly hair, the color of ripe corn, descending upon her forehead. The lamp shed a bluish light on her face and firm, graceful young figure, while she peered into the darkness with big eyes that seemed dark in the obscurity of the night, steadily supporting the lamp with her small, sunburnt hand. Behind her, in the shadow

of the room, stood another girl, equally tall and slender, but as dark as the former was fair. Further on, one perceived a lace cap, delicately posed on silver locks, and behind it a bald head and a long, drooping moustache.

"I was right, here they are!" said the girl who held the lamp.

She walked with a light, elastic step up to the table and placed the lamp upon it. The verandah appeared in all its intimate charm, with Ukrainian handwoven mats and carpets of bright, variegated colors, wicker armchairs padded with soft chintz cushions, an ancient floor with its chinks and crevices.

"Kotik!"

The dark girl, who wore a blue skirt and a hand embroidered Russian blouse with short, wide sleeves, threw her arms round Kotik's neck and vehemently kissed him.

"Wait a moment, Léka! . . . I am road-stained and dusty," cried the young man in a happy voice.

"Dusty or not, you are my brother," said Léka, kissing him once more on the cheek.

"Let go, Léka! Why should you be the first to kiss Kotik?" exclaimed the fair girl with a thick coil of hair twisted at the back of her head. "He belongs to me as much as he does to you."

She seized his arm and kissed him soundly on the ear.

"You deafen me, Maia."

"You are a dear," said Maia, repeating her kiss.

"Leave him in peace, children; you forget his friend," said the old lady in a mauve dress and cap with mauve ribbons who was following them, whilst Kotik buried his face on her shoulder.

Igrunka stood on the steps, leaning on his sword.

Léka was the first to go up to him.

"We are glad to see you, Igrunka; we expected you, Maia especially."

"Speak for yourself," said Maia, dropping a curtsey to her sister, while she held out her hand to Igrunka.

"Father, this is my dearest friend, Igor Kusskoff," said Kotik, introducing Igrunka to an elderly man in a cavalry uniform with the shoulder-straps of a retired colonel.

"Welcome to Spassofka," said the old man with a benevolent glance at the young one. "I know all about your father, an upright man, the very soul of honor, a man of iron will. You must be like him, judging by your face. Eh . . . but you are a handsome boy! A true hussar! Maia! Léka! Be careful! Do not lose your hearts to this hussar, do not burn it at the flame of his scarlet dolman."

"Father, how can you talk like this in the presence of a guest!" said Léka, reproachfully shaking her head.

"Well . . . I am talking Russian, you little fool. But enough of this. Quick, run to the kitchen—to the larder—turn the house upside down in honor of these brave hussars! Bring everything there is to eat and drink, according to the old Russian custom. They are good girls, Igor Fedorovitch, real treasures!"

"Don't stand on ceremony with him, father!" said Kotik. "Call him Igrunka. Your daughters do the same."

"My daughters are emancipated. They do as they like. But he, he is an officer, a hussar . . . he was preparing to serve the Emperor—" the old man stopped short, brushed away a tear and added: "Let me embrace you, my friend."

It was his wife's turn now to greet Igrunka. The young man bent down and kissed her hand.

"Quick, wash your hands and come into the dining-room," said old Ojoguin. "And you, girls, hurry. Tell Matrena to put four bottles of champagne on the ice. One hasn't every day the pleasure of entertaining two handsome hussars. I consider you as a son, Igor Fedorovitch. Look at him, my dear. Isn't he a splendid fellow?"

The house was alive, full of noise and clatter. Doors were banged . . . there was a patter of bare feet. A big lamp shed its light on the white table cloth, on the glasses, cups and saucers and piles of home made bread and cakes. Maia, Léka and the two bare-footed, rosy-cheeked servant girls in clean cotton dresses, who kept casting admiring glances at the young officers, hurried to and fro, from the kitchen to the dining-room, bringing plates and dishes and placing them on the table.

There was a most tempting display of *hors d'oeuvres*, hot and cold: caviar, smcked salmon of a

delicate pink color, golden "shamaia"* from the Don, fried sausages, mushrooms stewed or fried in sour cream, grilled kidneys, and a row of small decanters containing vodka of all kinds: yellow, the color of topaz, chrysolite-green, cornelian-crimson.

"Say grace, Léka," said old Ojoguin.

Kotik's youngest sister, Léka, a slender, graceful girl with a still undeveloped figure, out of breath with running, turned to the ikon hanging in a corner of the room, in front of which burnt a lamp of stained glass.

"O Lord! All eyes are cast on Thee with fervent hope."

"Sit down, all of you," ordered Ojoguin when she had finished. He poured, with a trembling hand, the transparent liquor into small crystal glasses.

"Now, gentlemen officers, stand up, according to the old custom," he said, rising too.

Kotik mechanically turned to the wall where he knew hung the Emperor's portrait. But instead of the familiar face of his Sovereign, he saw another one. Before he was able to distinguish its features, he heard his father's impatient voice behind him.

"Turn to the ikon, Kotik. God knows that our thoughts are with him who . . ., the Lord grant him strength to bear his cross, and help us to avoid dishonour. Let us drink in silence. Léka! Maia! You may have some cherry-brandy."

They drank in silence and resumed their seats.

* Kind of smoked fish.

Maia was sitting opposite Igrunka. Her eyes, shaded by long, dark eyelashes, were smiling; her fresh, rosy face, with a tender down, like that of a peach, was beaming with happiness.

"If one could only forget everything for a moment," she thought with a sigh.

"Léka! Fill his glass," ordered Ojoguin, pointing to Igrunka. "Maia! Pass him the shamaia."

He began to sing:

"Where are our friends of olden times,
Hussars both bold and true,
Merry talkers, sturdy drinkers
And jolly good fellows too!"

"You don't sing those songs, do you, eh? And who . . ." he stopped short, and then went on, in a strangled voice: "Who promoted you to the rank of officers?"

"Kerensky," answered Kotik, fixing his plate with a gloomy look.

There was an ominous silence, and Igrunka felt that everyone at that moment must be thinking: "They are not real officers."

His heart was like a stone, a feeling of deep humiliation got hold of him. The scarlet dolman hung heavily on his shoulders; he wanted to drink and forget; he held out his glass to Léka.

"Well!" said Evguénia Romanovna with a forced smile. "The angel of silence is passing."

"The Germans say: 'A lieutenant is paying his debts'," said Maia.

The conversation flagged. Everybody felt ill at ease. The housemaids brought in a beautiful turkey, white-fleshed and golden-skinned, and a roasted sucking-pig. Young and old fell to eating and drinking and forgot their troubles for awhile. The atmosphere gradually cleared.

"Unfasten your tunic, Igrunka," said Ojoguin, "I want you to feel at home."

"Oh, I'm all right, thanks," said Igrunka, looking embarrassed.

Léka dexterously unfastened his scarlet dolman,—everybody seemed gayer and more at ease.

The maids brought the champagne. There was a general move and stir; everybody pressed forward to congratulate the young officers upon their promotion. Igrunka felt his head turning as he rose from his chair.

"I am drunk," he thought and smiled. Maia was looking at him, smiling too. Kotik, who had drunk a good bit, went up with uncertain steps to the wall where the Emperor's portrait used to hang.

"Léka, bring a light," said he.

"What for?"—asked Evguénia Romanovna.

"Sister, do as I tell you!"

Léka took a lamp from the sideboard and lifted it to the height of the portrait, that of a young man with an impudent face.

"Who is this, mother?"—inquired Kotik.

"Can't you see? It is Kerensky."

"Mother!"

"Yes, Kotik, the district commissar brought it and had it hung up here, in order that everyone should know that we we are on the side of the Provisional Government, and I thought it best to let him do so," said Evguénia Romanovna.

"I — am — not — on — the — side — of — the — Pro-vi-sion-al Gov-ern-ment," said Kotik, emphasizing each syllable. "I am on the side of the Emper-or! Maia, Léka! bring our swords from the hall. Igrunka, come and help me. Father, do you mind?"

"Not I! Slash him in the face, son of a dog that he is!"

The girls hastened to obey their brother's order.

"Oh," cried Kotik, "how I hate his ugly mug! How could you, mother?"

The glass broke with a crash. Soon there was nothing left of the portrait except a heap of broken glass and torn paper.

The maids brought in the samovar. Maia placed some jam on the table.

"Kotik, this is your favorite blackberry jam," she said.

Kotik was silent, he was breathing heavily. All his good spirits seemed to have left him.

"Mother," said he, kissing his mother's hand, "forgive me. You must understand, . . . without Him, our house is no longer a home. This other, impudent face drove me mad. I am not drunk. Do not think I am. But when I think of what they have done . . .!

I know why everybody was silent when I said it was Kerensky who had promoted us to the rank of officers. Father! There can be no good without the Emperor."

"You are right, Kotik . . ." said Ojoguin. "Everything will perish without a God in Heaven and a Czar upon earth."

"Well! . . . we, too, shall perish," said Kotik, his voice ringing with passion. "But if we are to die, let it be to the sound of trumpets and music."

## V.

After supper, all retired to their rooms. Maia led the way, carrying a lamp. It was warm and cosy in the passage. English engravings, representing race-horses, hung on the white-washed walls. There was a smell of wormwood, of varnished deal and of dogs, —the smell of an old country house, of a family-nest.

Igrunka felt tired after his journey. He had eaten and drunk more than was his wont. His face was flushed, his thick blonde hair in disorder.

Maia turned round and smiled at him.

"Igrunka, do you remember the cotillon at the Vorotynsky's?"

During this cotillon Igrunka, who was at that time only a stripling, a pupil of the Cavalry School, had proposed to Maia.

"Maia!"

"My darling," she murmured, opening a door.

"This is your room."

Dark shadows glided along the room and stopped on the walls and the window with its tightly closed white shutters.

"Good night," said Maia, curtsying at the door.

A friendly silence greeted Igrunka. Not a sound reached his ear. The wide wooden bed, with its piled

up cushions and spotless white sheets, seemed to invite him with a smile, smelling of clean, fresh linen. On a table, close to the window, stood a tall crystal glass with a big bunch of verbenas, filling the room with a delicate autumn fragrance. Everything was neat, old and comfortable. Old engravings looked down from the white-washed walls. The old-fashioned, pot-bellied chest of drawers seemed to be alive and full of kindliness towards its guest.

Since his childhood Igrunka had never had a bedroom of his own as far as he could remember; he had always shared one with his brothers. When home on leave from the Cadet Corps, a bed had been spread for him on the sofa in the drawing-room, or else on several chairs drawn together in the dining-room.

He felt giddy. He listened intently, but no sound disturbed the silence of the night. The old house seemed enchanted and asleep, bathed in the glory of the moonlit autumn night.

"How nice!" thought Igrunka. . .

He promptly undressed and threw himself down on the bed. An old engraving of the Roman Coliseum, in mellow, sepia tones, looked down on him from the wall. It also seemed familiar, maybe because it was old. Igrunka blew out his candle and fell into a deep, untroubled sleep, lulled by the security of this old house with its thick, solid walls. The shutters did not rattle. Nothing moved behind the window.

He awoke the next morning, vigorous and refreshed. It was dark in the room, but a golden light was steal-

ing through the chinks of the shutters, shedding luminous rays in the velvety twilight. He saw his dolman hanging on the back of a chair, and the golden rosettes of his boots glittered as one of the rays of light fell upon them.

"How nice!" murmured Igrunka.

He glanced at his watch: "A quarter to eleven! I've had a long sleep. How calm and quiet everything is in the house."

He jumped out of bed, ran to the window and opened the shutters. A glorious autumn day flooded the room with light and sunshine. The window opened onto the garden. The burnt, yellow grass sparkled with myriads of tiny drops of hoar-frost which had thawed in the sun. Verbenas lifted their star-like heads. The apple-trees were bare. An avenue of pyramidal poplars, with leaves turning yellow, led to the gate. The window was framed in Virginia creeper; its leaves, crimson, yellow and green hung limply around it. Through the denuded branches one caught a glimpse of the grey wooden fence, on its low brick foundation, which enclosed the garden. It was sadly in need of repainting. Beyond that was the courtyard, surrounded by outbuildings and barns. There was not a cloud in the pale blue sky. A light vapor rose from the earth, softening the coloring in the distance.

Light footsteps were heard in the corridor. Maia and Léka passed Igrunka's door, softly humming a tune.

Igrunka dressed and left the room.

In the dining-room, with its polished floors and narrow strips of carpet, on a large table, stood a samovar; and thick clouds of smoke escaped from it. There were eggs, bread, butter, the remnants of cold turkey and roasted suckling-pig spread out. All the family were present, waiting for Igrunka.

Maia had, in front of her, a plate with thin white slices of turkey and a piece of black bread, which she was coating thickly with butter.

Her blue eyes were smiling, her small, white, even teeth were ready to bite into the bread; her rosy cheeks were fresh from sleep.

"Igrunka, will you have some 'kaimak'?* I am sure you never tasted any?" said Léka.

"Let him have some suckling-pig first," said Evguénia Romanovna in a languid voice.

Igrunka ate suckling-pig and turkey, bread and butter, eggs and kaimak, and drank no end of tea.

* A mixture of thick cream boiled with sugar.

## VI.

Maia and Léka sat in their favorite corner in the park, by the side of the pond, near the dam, where the willows fell like a canopy over the water Kotik stood in front of them, leaning against the trunk of a tree, talking with great animation.

"You ought to come to a decision about Igrunka, Maia. He is my best friend. He is of a chivalrous nature and I have no doubt as to his intentions. I know that he will propose to you. What will your answer be?"

"I don't know."

"Maia, darling, you must know. This is not a joking matter."

"You love him?" exclaimed Léka.

"Yes, . . . at least . . . I like him very much. But I do not care to become Mme. Kusskoff."

"They belong to the old nobility," said Kotik.

"May be . . . but they are ruined . . . and besides . . . this aunt, the wife of a postman . . ." said Maia, lifting her lovely blue eyes to her brother.

"I didn't know you were such a snob, Maia."

"I am not a snob, but I cannot overlook certain things. There is also a socialist uncle, an ex-political exile, who was not married in church and whose son is a bastard. Disgusting!"

"At the present time, a socialist uncle is a guarantee of protection," remarked her sister.

"Be quiet, Léka, we are not joking," said Kotik. "My friend is in love."

"And I like him," said Maia. "If it were not for the war, I would be ready to marry him provisionally."

"Provisionally? What do you mean?"

"Yes, as Nina Dranitzin married Sandik. She lived with him for six months and enjoyed being his wife. Then, . . . there was a divorce and she married Balabanin in America, . . . you know him, . . . the stout profiteer? She is very happy. She wrote me that they had a villa at the sea-side."

"So this is your way of looking upon marriage."

"I look upon it in a practical way. In former times our parents sought to establish us in life. At present we must look out for ourselves. Igrunka has a handsome face and a slender waist, like a girl, but he hasn't a penny of his own, and he has doubtful relations. We are not ruined yet, but we are on the eve of being so. Igrunka will not consent to bury himself for the rest of his life at Spassofka, fighting with the peasants, like father. He wishes to be in the army. And I, what shall I be? The wife of a poor army officer? It doesn't appeal to me."

"Maia, who taught you to reason so coldly?"

"Life . . . I am a modern girl, Kotik. I have read a lot in the last two years. A girl's happiness, . . . a woman's happiness . . . I have thought very much about it all."

"I own that I have never given it a thought," said Kotik; but I know what Igrunka would say: "A girl's happiness lies in her family; a woman's happiness lies in the accomplishment of her duty."

"Yes, of course. You men, you still look upon women as upon slaves. But we, girls of the twentieth century, . . . this kind of thing does not appeal to us."

"What is it you want, Maia?"

"Equality."

"You want to work, to serve, like a man?"

"No, I am incapable of it, I am too much of a woman for that. . . I would like. . . Tell me, Kotik, I know that your friend has no secrets from you. Tell me, has Igrunka loved anyone before me?"

"What do you mean?" said Kotik, taken aback by her question, "I do not understand you, Maia."

"Does he know what love is? Has he loved before?" Kotik blushed.

"No," he said.

"Kotik, you lie."

"Well," he said, "I know nothing about it. But what is all this to you, Maia? It doesn't concern you."

"It concerns me more than you think, may be."

"Well, answer me frankly. If my friend proposes to you, what will you say?"

"I shall tell him that I will think it over."

"A rotten answer. He must join his regiment, . . . he must go to the war. He is ready to wait, but he would like to be sure."

"He has already spoken to me at the Vorotynsky's ball."

"That doesn't count," said Léka. "You gave him no answer that time."

"Will you promise him to wait?" insisted Kotik.

"Why, you are a regular match maker," said Maia with a laugh.

"Maia, . . . I am Igrunka's friend. I am very fond of him. He is an honest man and a gentleman. He is full of enthusiasm and he has loved you faithfully, you alone, all these five years."

"Well, what else have you to say?"

"He told me he would ask for your hand."

"My parents?"

"Later on, our parents, but he wishes to obtain your consent first."

"Provisionally, . . . provisionally . . ." cried Maia blushing and covering her face with her hands. She started running to the house and came face to face with Igrunka. She turned back to the pond. Igrunka followed her. At their approach, Kotik and Léka rapidly walked away, leaving the pair alone.

"Traitors!" cried Maia after them.

There was not a ripple on the water that bathed the sloping bank. The rushes rustled faintly. The leaves of the white water-lilies lay on the surface, and in the distance the pond shone like a mirror. A group of village-children had gathered on the opposite shore. They stood for a moment gazing with open mouths at the handsome hussar, and then ran away, raising

clouds of dust with their bare feet. One could hear the regular sound of the threshing-machine beyond the dam.

"Do you like my dolman, Maia?" asked Igrunka.

"It is very becoming, but I don't care for red any more."

Igrunka played with the gold braid of his uniform. The conversation dragged. The autumn air was fresh, but his face was burning.

"Let us sit down," he said.

They sat down on the grass, in awkward silence.

"Are you fond of the country?" said Igrunka at last.

"I used to be, but I don't like it any longer."

"Why?"

"Because the country is not safe at present."

"Were the Constantinoffs away when the peasants burnt down and pillaged their house?" asked Igrunka in a voice that did not sound like his own.

"Yes, they left for abroad in March, and they sold their estate during their stay in Sweden."

"The peasants, then, destroyed an estate belonging to new proprietors?"

"Yes, to a foreign company."

"Did they burn everything down?"

"Everything. They slaughtered the cattle and led the horses away."

"Bad business!"

"Nothing could be worse."

"If my hussars had been there, they would have prevented it."

"One cannot trust anybody now," said Maia; and bending her head she remained silent.

Igrunka stretched out his brown, sunburnt hand and timidly touched Maia's fingers. She did not draw her hand away. They remained thus for a few moments, without speaking

"Maia," said Igrunka at last, "do you trust me?" Maia was silent.

"My whole life, . . . all my dreams, . . . the regiment . . . and you, Maia, . . . you. . ."

Maia did not lift her head. She was listening to the throbbing of her heart—she was happy. She stole a glance at Igrunka's flushed boyish face. How handsome he looked in his scarlet uniform. Maia thought she could see his heart beating under the golden eagle, badge of the Cavalry School, pinned on his breast.

"Maia, why don't you say something?"

"What shall I say?"

"Maia! . . . all my future, . . . my whole life, . . . everything is yours!"

"Thank you," said Maia.

Her heart was beating fast. She was thinking: "What a thrilling moment. Will he really propose to me? What shall I answer?"

"Maia, I must leave in a few days for Proskuroff . . . and . . . I should like to know whether you care for me?"

"Do girls ever own to such things?" she answered, pressing Igrunka's hand.

Igrunka cast a more assured glance at Maia. But she seemed so distant and unattainable, in her white blouse close about her slender throat.

"Maia, I know it is not the time to speak. A soldier ought not, perhaps, to think and talk of these things at the present moment. But—I have loved you for years, Maia. Tell me if there is any hope for me?"

"You may hope," she replied softly.

"No, Maia, tell me, will you be my wife? When these terrible times are over, when the Constituent Assembly has brought back the Czar, may I hope, Maia, that you will consent to marry a simple subaltern of the Hussars?"

"He has proposed to me," thought Maia, "and very nicely,—I wish I could write it down. How handsome he is, what eyes! Wonderful eyes!"

"Maia . . .?"

Igrunka timidly lifted Maia's hand to his lips. She put her other arm round his neck with a childish gesture, and wanted to kiss him on the cheek, but her lips met his—and . . . she did not withdraw them.

"Yes," she said at last, tearing herself away from Igrunka. "But don't say anything about it just now, not even to my parents. This is our secret,"—she jumped up and ran towards the house.

"But I have your word, Maia?" Igrunka cried, rising.

Maia looked round hurriedly:

"You have it!"

## VII.

A FORTNIGHT later, Igrunka reported to the chief of his squadron at Proskuroff, a garrison town in the region of Kieff. An outrageous event had just taken place in the regiment. The soldiers' committee had decided to sell all the horses privately owned by the officers, in order to place the latter on the same level as the men. The colonel of the regiment knew that these horses were to be bought up by Jewish dealers and sent across the frontier for sale to the Germans. He had endeavoured to talk it over with the soldiers, had even gone so far as to call them "comrades," but had met with stubborn silence from the majority of them and with passionate, hysterical speeches, full of cheap, ready-made phrases, from the junior clerk, and from the assistant-surgeon of the regiment.

Igrunka, who had pictured regimental life as a sort of sporting family-party with merry evenings, songs and tales of great deeds and military glory, was struck by the anxious, troubled faces which met him on his arrival. The officers were at a loss how to face the situation.

Igrunka was almost at once assigned as troop-commander, to guard one of the big sugar factories in the district.

When he galloped up to his men on the black mare, "Contrabass," which had been allotted to him, greeting them with the usual *"Zdorovo, goussary,"* the answer he received was a curt and gloomy: *"Zdravstvouité, Gospodin kornet."**

Igrunka felt as if he had suddenly been dipped in icy water. But he was young, and not easily daunted. His heart sank, he hated this unfamiliar answer to his greeting, but he did not lose his self-control and showed no signs of displeasure.

An idle crowd had gathered in the town-square. In those early days of the revolution everyone was eager to be out in the street, celebrating the advent of long-desired "liberty." Men belonging to other squadrons—a grey mass of soldiers—surrounded Igrunka and openly discussed him.

"Thinks himself mighty clever to have galloped up in this way. Must be taught better. These are not the times of the old régime."

"A gallant young fellow . . ."

"Maybe, but he ought to greet us with a little less cheek. We are all equals, all comrades at present."

* The first phrase means at the same time, "Good morning" and "Good health to you, hussars." The traditional answer to an officer's greeting was: *"Zdravia jelaém, Vashé Blagorodié,"* which means: "We wish you good health, Your Honor."

The revolutionary chiefs, who copied the French revolution and destroyed all titles, had changed this into: "Good morning, Sir," or rather, into the French: "Bonjour, Monsieur le Sous-Lieutenant," which is the literal translation of *Zdravstvouité, gospodin kornet.* The expression *gospodin*—"Monsieur," being very seldom used in Russia, this sounded unfamiliar, foreign and unmilitary.

"He is young, he'll know better by and by."

"He must be taught to know better."

Igrunka heard and made a mental note of everything. He longed to get away from the crowd, from these impudent, giggling young men who forced their way to the front and played the role of leaders. When the steppe closed behind him and his little troop of horsemen, when grey stubble-fields and the bright emerald green of the young winter-corn stretched on either side of them, the soldiers' attitude seemed to change entirely.

"Halt!" commanded Igrunka. "Dismount and rest for a while."

Ivan Saénko, a handsome young man, ran up to him and, taking Igrunka's mare by the bridle, patted her on the nose and said:

"A good horse, Sir! I have ridden her. She has a fine gait."

"I have known better ones," Igrunka said indifferently, taking out his cigarette-case.

Saénko fumbled in the pocket of his breeches, pulled out a match-box, struck a match and offered it to his officer.

"Do you smoke?" asked Igrunka.

"I do, Sir."

"Have a cigarette."

"Thank you, Sir."

They both stood smoking with evident pleasure.

They remained thus, silent, for a few moments.

Twenty men and a young first-lieutenant. The hussars gazed at their officer and their officer at his men.

"They tell us to strangle them?" thought the soldiers. "But why should we do it? There is a good officer . . . seems to understand things."

"Fine men, all of them," mused Igrunka. "That one yonder, with the black moustache and the Cross of St. George, . . . that is the stuff to raid the Germans with."

Their reply to his greeting came back to his mind. "The Jews have put them up to this," thought he. "Fools . . . I shall teach them to know better."

They mounted their horses and rode on.

"Shall we have a song, boys?"

"We don't sing any more songs," gloomily replied the sergeant.

"Why not?"

"We don't feel like singing."

"And we don't know any nice songs," bitterly added the soldier with the black moustache and the Cross of St. George.

"Don't you?" said Igrunka. "Well, then, you are no hussars."

The ice was broken. His boldness took the soldiers aback, and there was no loafer about, to teach them what to do in such a case.

"We have no one to lead," timidly said the sergeant.

"Too bad . . . then I will do it," said Igrunka.

He had inherited a fine voice from his mother, and he led the choir at the Cavalry School. He sang well.

And now his heart was full of Maia, and full of pride at the thought that these twenty men, all of them his seniors, were listening to him, a boy. He felt inspired. He sang the first verse of an old hussar-song.

"I am a true hussar,
Have given my heart to my Tzar.
We are smart to a man
With trumpeters leading the van!
When he is on his steed,
The hussar is happy indeed!
And with the bugle's din,
He rides through thick and thin."

"Well," said he, turning to the soldiers, "why don't you join in?"

"We don't know this sort of song," said the sergeant. He looked sulky and annoyed.

"What songs do you know then?"

"We have forgotten all the old songs."

"And the new ones?"

"They are not fit to be sung," curtly replied the sergeant.

"And you call yourselves hussars! All right, I will sing alone, and you listen and try to remember the tunes . . . and the words."

They rode on for two hours, until they reached the sugar factory. When they did not trot, but walked their horses, Igrunka sang to them, old Russian and soldier-songs. These songs went to the heart, but the

socialists had poisoned the minds of the men: they were silent.

They were nearing the sugar factory, when Igrunka turned to them:

"Eh," said he, "you will never give an Emperor back to Russia. You are only good to stretch hemp . . . and you are sure to swing! And you will hang your country too!"

A room had been prepared for Igrunka in the manager's house at the factory, but he refused to occupy it, preferring to share the soldiers' quarters. A sheet was hung up to separate him from his men. He lived on an equal footing with them. The laws of communal life were well-known to him, from the time when he was a cadet at the Corps and, later on, a pupil of the Cavalry School. It was considered bad form to eat sweets secretly from his companions. The hussars were his companions and he shared with them everything he had. The troop was gradually welded into one solid whole. There was nothing to do. They sat all day in front of the factory, or in bad weather on the wide boards on which they slept at night.

Igrunka called the elderly sergeant, Rosevik, by his name and patronymic: "Grigori Grigoriévitch," whilst the soldier with the black moustache—Jikhar—was "Stiopa," and the best dancer of the troop—Korotkoff —"Fédia."

They sent to town for Igrunka's guitar and Vanusha Yermoloff's accordion. Preparations were made for a concert and some theatricals. They did gym-

nastics in the courtyard of the factory. Grigori Grigoriévitch had taken to calling Igrunka "Your Honor." The old discipline was reviving. They were ashamed of going about looking slovenly, unwashed and unkempt. The horses were well groomed and well fed.

"Do you know," Igrunka said one evening to his soldiers, when they were all sitting under the hanging-lamp, mending their clothes or smoking, "do you know why an officer used always to be called 'Your Honor?' "

The soldiers frowned and remained silent. They did not like to be reminded of the past.

"Because," boldly went on Igrunka, "an officer must always be honorable in all his actions. He must not lie or deceive, he must do honor to his uniform, and the soldiers, by calling him thus, were always reminding him of his duty."

Igrunka stopped for a moment. The men did not speak. The tailor, a young beardless fellow, lifted his head from his work and fixed his grey eyes on Igrunka.

"You want change and new things," said the young officer, raising his voice. "Was, then, the past really so bad?"

"They used to beat the soldiers for the slightest offence," said Ivan Alferoff, a peasant of the government of Voronéj, in a hesitating voice.

"Did they?" said Igrunka. Have you ever been beaten, Ivan Kozmitch?"

"No, . . . never," answered Alferoff, blushing.

"And you, Grigori Grigoriévitch?" asked Igrunka, turning to the sergeant.

"Never, Your Honor," was the energetic reply.

"And you, Stiopa?"

"Never," said Jikhar, rising from his seat.

Igrunka questioned them all by turn. It appeared that none of them had ever been beaten, although many of them had served for over four years in the army, and some of them even six, having been kept there by the war.

"This is the way in which lies are propagated and take root, my friends," said Igrunka in a low voice.

"Yes, and who wants them?" said Rosevik.

"Who? The enemies of Russia, those who envy her wealth and power, and, before all, the Jews, who hated the Government for preventing them from exploiting the Russian people."

He spoke to them of the glorious past of Russia, of her struggles with the wild hordes of the Polovtzys and the Pétchénégues, of the merchants who sailed down the Dnieper, carrying wax and honey, furs, wheat and flax to Constantinople, bringing back from there rich velvets and silks, copper, weapons, glassware. He told them how the Pétchénégues, the Polovtzys and the Khasars attacked and plundered the merchants, and how the latter were obliged to hire armed men to guard the strings of boats. Thus, he said, were formed the first "droujinas" or military companies, with their chiefs and leaders; and, soon after, princes and judges made their appearance.

All that he had learned at school, all that his mother and, later on, his father had taught him during the summer holidays, he now told the soldiers, and felt that he was gaining influence over them, and although younger in years than they, was accepted and recognized by them as their chief and senior in knowledge and understanding.

Sasha Shtcherbakoff was laid up with typhoid fever and taken to the factory hospital. Igrunka often went to see him there.

"Your Honor," Sasha said to him one day,—he was pale and breathed with difficulty,—"Strange dreams worry me, give me no rest. My father and mother are far away. In those accursed days of March, I threw away the cross with which they had blessed me. Will you give me your blessing. You are like a father to us. If I die, I shall not fear to appear before the Lord."

Igrunka took down from his neck the silk cord on which hung two crosses and three small ikons. The most treasured of them all was the cross that his mother had hung round his neck on the day when he had been promoted to officer's rank. It was a heavy and very ancient cross. His grandmother, Varvara Sergueievna, had worn it. She was said to have led the life of a saint. This cross was considered in the family to be miraculous. The other one was his baptismal cross, which had been given him at his christening by his godfather, his uncle Benedict. One of the little ikons had been given him by Taniusha Loskutova,

when she had said goodbye to him. She had cried and blessed him. Another ikon was a present from his schoolfellows at the Cavalry School. It bore an inscription: "God keep and guard you."

The third little ikon had been given to him two weeks ago by Maia.

Igrunka unfastened the cord and took off his mother's gift. He made the sign of the cross and blessed Shtcherbakoff, kissing him on his dry, parched lips. Then he laid the cross on his breast.

Shtcherbakoff recovered. The doctors had given him up and his companions never thought to see him again in their midst. The miraculous cross—a mother's gift—had saved his life.

The relations between the hussars and their officer became still warmer and closer. They always called him "Your Honor" now, when addressing him or even speaking of him.

## VIII.

THE news of the Bolshevist "coup d'état" reached the factory, but produced very little impression upon Igrunka. In his opinion, there was no essential difference between the bolshevists, the menshevists and the "cadets," between Prince Lvoff, Kerensky and Lenin. All were equally hateful to him. Each had done his share to destroy the army and incite the soldiers against the officers. Colonel Lévénetz had been killed under the Provisional Government, and the young man could not forget this murder. As to the soldiers, they did not care who was at the head of the Government, provided the war was brought to an end and they could go home and divide the land among themselves.

There were vague rumors concerning the democratisation of the army, the introduction of the principle of electing chiefs and the "Ukrainisation"—equivalent to the "territorialisation"—of the Tchernobylsky Hussars.

The Colonel of the regiment called the troop back to Proskuroff.

It was a clear November day. The bleak, frost-bound steppe stretched on either side of the wide road, with its deep ruts and pools of frozen water. A white

winter-mist hid the horizon from view; the young winter-corn was covered with hoar-frost, and the willows on the edges of the road looked like phantoms enveloped in white shrouds. Igrunka rode with his troop to Proskuroff.

The soldiers sang old hussar songs all the way back. Igrunka led the choir and Vaniusha Yermoloff managed to play his accordion even while trotting. Igrunka hoped to find the same cheerful, intimate atmosphere in the regiment.

But he was soon disillusioned. The officers, bullied and set at naught by the committees, kept away. The men drank and played cards from morning to night.

The elections of senior commanding officers were fixed on November twentieth. Igrunka was unanimously elected commanding officer of his troop. The vet, Saveloff, was elected Colonel of the regiment.

Late at night the officers met at the house of the late Colonel. They held a council and decided to leave the regiment, taking the colors with them, and disperse in different directions. After a short prayer, they took the flag from the staff and handed it over to two of the senior captains, who started that very night for the south, in disguise.

Sasha Shtcherbakoff was waiting for Igrunka at the door of his room.

"Your Honor," said he, taking him mysteriously aside. "Your Honor, you must leave immediately. Colonel Saveloff has ordered your arrest. They want to send you to Petrograd, to the Soviet. You are

accused of having carried on a counter-revolutionary propaganda at the factory. You must start at once, Your Honor. The troop is waiting to take leave of you in the market-place."

The heart of the young man was heavy as he approached the square.

The twenty men were assembled in the market-place, on this dark and cold November night. Their faces looked pale and gloomy under the light of the street-lantern. The red shoulder-straps had disappeared from their greatcoats. They had taken them off by order of the new Colonel, Saveloff, as smacking too much of the old regime.

Igrunka had put all his heart into the education of these twenty men. He had grown to love them with all the fervor of youth. And they had been unable to stand up for him.

"Thank you, my friends," he said, "for having elected me to be your commanding officer. Thank you for your trust and confidence. But I do not recognise the principle of election. The sight of our uniform without the old hussar shoulder-straps is hateful to me. Good-bye. Remember me kindly. I am leaving you. Good-bye!"

The hussars were silent. Their faces were pale and stern. They were the playthings of fate. Against their will, against their inclination, they were obliged to part from their most popular officer.

He turned to go, but the men surrounded him.

"Don't bear us a grudge, Your Honor. . ."

"What can we do? . . ."

"We would have liked to keep you here, but the bulk of the soldiers . . ."

"Saveloff is omnipotent with them."

"You must join the Cossacks of the Don, the N. regiment, Your Honor; they will hide you."

"You must try to understand us, Your Honor."

Igrunka could not understand it, and therefore could not forgive his hussars. The wounds of his heart deepened and the cold of steel entered it.

Only after three months of wandering did he succeed in joining the Cossacks, who received him with open arms. He shared with them a winter campaign across the steppe. In Rostoff he met several old schoolfellows who invited him to join the Volunteer Army which was being founded by General Alexéeff and General Korniloff. But he had got attached to the Cossack regiment. The young Colonel, Krivtzoff, treated him like a brother . . . the Cossacks seemed so well-meaning. . . He left Rostoff with them.

At Novotcherkassk, in the little square in front of the Palace, he saw the Ataman, Kaledin, tall and spare, with a wan face and the eyes of a martyr. His assistant, Mitrofanoff, made a long and eloquent speech. The Cossacks swore to be staunch and loyal to their regiment and their Ataman, and to keep the "red scoundrels" away from the Don.

They rode through the town with songs and military music and stood in front of the Cathedral, where the

Metropolitan celebrated a Te Deum and sprinkled them with holy water.

But, no sooner had they reached the Sétrakoff farm than agitators appeared in the regiment and propaganda began.

"Well, comrades," they said. "Here you are, once more, under the rule of the officers. Do you wish then to be stationed for months, may be, for years, on the Polish frontier, without seeing your families? Do you want your wives to be straw-widows for ever? What was the revolution for? Why did the people work to obtain liberty?"

"Liberty!" The word intoxicated them. It went to their heads and made them see things red. They clamored for "rights," refusing to recognise any duties.

The Cossacks began to tear off their shoulder-straps. They smeared their cockades with red ink. They arrested their officers and decided to disperse and return to their homes.

Tragic news came from Novotcherkassk. The legendary heroes, Tchernetzoff and Tikhon Krasninsky, had perished in the fray. Ataman Kaledin had shot himself. Drunken Goluboff, with a horde of Cossacks of the 10th Don Cossack regiment, a new Stenka Razin, was marching on Novotcherkassk.

An old Cossack, Danilovitch, took pity on Igrunka. He hid him under some flour sacks and took him in a cart across the frontier of the Government of Kharkoff, to a railway station.

Where was he to go? What was he to do?

His mother, his aunt Lipotchka, and perhaps his father were in Moscow. But Moscow was in the hands of the Bolsheviks

He decided to go to Spasskoié, to the Ojoguins. There was his fiancée.

He could do nothing for his country. He wanted to rest and think. He longed to sleep once more in the quiet, peaceful bedroom with the old, pot-bellied chest of drawers, and the fragrant smell of lavender and fresh linen, and the Roman Coliseum looking down from the wall.

At the station of Lisski, the engine-driver pointed him out to the crowd.

"This is an officer, comrades," he said. "He must be arrested and delivered into the hands of the Soviet of Workmen and Soldiers' Deputies."

"We will see to this," said the soldiers, and took Igrunka with them into the railway carriage.

The conversation was about shootings and executions, about murdering officers; they called them the enemies of the people and said that they must all be exterminated. Through the open door of the carriage, one could see the snow-bound steppe stretching in front. The frosty air that came through the door into the crowded carriage filled the air with a thick mist. The wheels were droning their monotonous song, and Igrunka felt that his last hour had come. But he did not want to die.

The train had gathered speed, going down a grade. Igrunka thrust the soldier who guarded the door

roughly aside and jumped down into the snow. He got up, shook the snow off his coat and bounded with great strides across the steppe.

Several shots were fired at him, but the train disappeared into the distance. They did not pursue him.

Then came a night spent in the house of a bootmaker, in the village of Serguéevka. He introduced himself to his host as an assistant-surgeon. He continued his journey with another company of soldiers, until he finally reached the station where he had alighted with Kotik Ojoguin in October, feeling so gay and happy.

Not a year had elapsed since that day, and how different everything was!

It was no longer in a victoria driven by a pair of bays, but in a peasant's cart, with a soldier who had volunteered to give him a lift, that Igrunka approached Spassofka in the early hours of the morning.

## IX.

The house of Spassofka was asleep, and yet awake. or so it seemed to Igrunka. There were many footprints on the wet sand of the garden paths. A red flag, on an old, some-time gilt staff, was hanging limply down over the balcony. The long grey front with its white columns and tall, dark windows was now clearly visible through the trellis of the bare Virginia creeper, covered with buds swelling with the sap of spring. All the shutters were tightly closed from within.

What had happened at Spassofka since he had left it? Were the old Ojoguins there? Where were Maia and Léka? Where was Kotik? Igrunka had not found his friend with the regiment when he had returned from the sugar factory. Why were there so many footprints on the garden-paths, and why were all the shutters closed?

Igrunka paused for a moment, uncertain where to go and what to do? He decided it would be safer to reconnoitre first and try to find out what was going on inside the house, under the cover of the red flag. Perhaps the very soldiers from whom he was trying to escape were there.

He walked round the house. A narrow strip of dark, porous snow still lay along its northern side.

Large drops of water trickled down from the roof into the small pools formed by the thaw and rain. Birds were singing their spring-songs. One could hear the cocks crowing behind the house and the geese cackling in the village. A smell of burnt straw was in the air.

Igrunka passed under the windows of Maia and Léka. Further on was the old Ojoguins' bedroom, the maids' room, the room where he had slept on his previous visit to Spassofka, and Kotik's room. He knocked at the window-pane of the last.

"Who is there?" said a voice. A yellow light flashed through the chinks of the shutters. Someone had lit a candle. The shutters were unfastened; Kotik appeared at the window and opened it.

"Igrunka! Where do you come from? How did you get here? Climb in."

Kotik sat on the edge of the bed. He had grown thinner. His eyes were sunken. He had evidently gone through troubled times.

"Why didn't you come in through the front-door? Did you know I was here?"

"I saw the red flag and I was afraid to come in. I didn't know whether any of you were at home."

"Strange things are happening here," said Kotik. "The house is full of uninvited guests. It is all mother's doings. She hung up Kerensky's portrait, you remember, and now she has hoisted the red flag. She thinks it will save our house from being plundered. Red intelligence service men are staying here."

"Who are they?"

"Well, they are partly people of our own set. You remember that student Kulomzin, the son of General Kulomzin. There is also his friend Hansalt—a disgusting fellow, between you and me—and the ensign Gorbunoff. Then there are representatives of the democracy—Grishin, a sailor of the Baltic Fleet, who affects to be noble-minded; the soldier Pantiukhin—and, as in every Soviet institution there is necessarily a Jew, Itzka Mordkin, the son of the village tailor, an overgrown youth who has not yet left school. They have their office and their orderlies here, and a room for their prisoners. The house has become a kind of Noah's Ark. Maia and Léka sleep together. I have kept my room. We'll share it."

"What does the intelligence service do?"

"Honestly, I don't know. They try to prevent the officers and military cadets from making their way to the south, to the Volunteer Army. There is a rumor of a regiment being formed here—the 1st Soviet Cavalry Regiment. Colonel Komleff, formerly of the Nth Hussars, will be in command of it. Perhaps we shall have to take up service with this regiment."

"How do you spend your time?"

"Oh, we lead the devil of a life! We are enjoying ourselves. The girls have quite lost their heads. We have parties, music and singing every night. The village boys and girls take part. We are preparing for a fancy-dress ball. The Prince—or, as they call him now,—ex-Prince Skosyrsky, a very nice fellow, is organizing some tableaux. We often go to town, and

the town-people come here. Three troikas are constantly running back and forth. Our young race-horses have been put into harness. Monna Vanna,—you remember her, has already broken down."

"Why, Kotik! Do you know nothing of Tchernetzoff, of the battles near Rostoff and the Constantinovskaia? Haven't you heard of the Volunteer Army, which General Alexéeff, ex-Chief of the General Staff of the Emperor, and General Korniloff, ex-Commander in Chief, are forming, in order to re-establish the front and restore Russia to its former might and glory? I have left the regiment. The officers have sworn to serve their country loyally and have taken the colors of the regiment with them as a relic of the past. These people among whom you live are our enemies, the enemies of Russia, Kotik. And you are with them?"

Kotik lit another cigarette and smoked in silence, letting the smoke curl up to the ceiling. His face had assumed a greyish hue, like that of the soldiers' faces Igrunka had lately seen. He glanced dully at his friend.

"Listen, Igrunka," he said at last. "You can hardly doubt my devotion to the Emperor. I am almost sure that Kulomzin, and the soldier Pantiokhin, and the sailor Grishin, are also monarchists,* and cannot conceive Russia without a Czar. We have heard about

* There was a kind of belief, at that time, that many so-called Bolshevists were in reality masked monarchists who, having driven away the Social-Revolutionaries, worked for their own ends. On the other hand, many of the officers distrusted the Volunteer Army because it did not openly proclaim itself a monarchist army.

the Volunteer Army, . . . but . . . what kind of an army is it? We do not know."

"It is . . . a White army . . ." said Igrunka in a trembling voice, "and you, . . . you are reds. You are those who killed Colonel Lévénetz, who made the Emperor a prisoner, . . . those who have signed an incredibly shameful peace with the Germans."

Kotik's face became a shade greyer.

"Igrunka," he said, drawing his friend close to him and forcing him down at his side. "When I hear you speak, I am ready to believe you. I am ready to believe that truth and honor are on the side of these armies in the south. But what am I to do? How can I abandon my mother and my father, and my sisters? If I go against the people, the whole village will rise against us, and what will become of us then? My mother, my father, Maia, Léka, our old nurse . . . all of us have lived all our lives at Spassofka, we have taken root here, and we cannot break these ties with impunity. We are obliged to seek for an issue, without leaving the place. We are looking for a compromise."

"Compromises have never saved anybody, and this is a compromise with your conscience."

Kotik remained silent.

"It is absurd!" said Igrunka. "You want to become a communist in order to save your property. You will join the Bolsheviks and deny the right of the landowners to their land—in order to remain a landowner!"

"This is—Russian communism. Names and appellations will change, but the essence of things will remain the same."

"What am I to do, then?" asked Igrunka.

"Stay with us. Live and observe, . . . see how it ends. Your scarlet dolman is here. You ought to wear it—red is all the fashion now. Act according to circumstances. You must marry my sister Maia."

"Kotik! All this is bewildering! When I was a cadet, and later on a pupil of the Cavalry School, I always knew what I had to do. But after that, . . . after the revolution . . . Oh, if only someone strong and masterful would come, someone I could trust and believe, who would tell me which way to go! If the Emperor could let us hear from him from Tobolsk! Kotik, we are young. We don't understand anything about politics. You say: 'The people are here, . . . and there are only the generals.' But why does my heart lean towards the latter? Our glorious white, blue and red Russian flag is there, . . . our shoulder-straps. Here, there is the red flag and the profanation of everything Russian. The Jews are here, Kotik."

Kotik was silent for a moment, then he said, kindly:

"Maia is here. It is not for you or me to decide these questions. Someone from above will decide them for us. And in the meantime, . . . try to be happy."

## X.

On Good Friday, Evguénia Romanovna, Maia and Léka were busy in the kitchen preparing for the traditional Easter midnight supper. The communists did not interfere, although they made fun of what they called "pagan customs." At dinner that evening Hansalt held forth, going back to the times of the ancient Greeks and Romans and endeavoring to prove that Easter was in reality the Feast of Spring, and had been celebrated as such through all ages and by all nations of the world.

"The Workmen and Peasants' Government," he said, "will replace it by the Workmen's Feast of the Lust of May. Your Easter Feast will lose all significance, all that will be left of it will be the 'koulitchi' and 'paskhas'—the Easter delicacies—the origin of which our children will find difficult to trace or explain. The custom of kissing* on Easter-day will be replaced by a far sweeter and more earnest custom. On that festive day, boys and girls will be allowed to love one another freely, and as a result of this. . ."

* Among the peasantry it was the custom to kiss each other three times on the cheek. It existed in higher classes among friends and relations.

"Gently," interrupted Igrunka, "don't forget where you are."

"And where am I, comrade?" asked Hansalt in an off-hand way.

"In a decent family where there are gentlewomen," replied Igrunka.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. "Mille pardons, Mesdemoiselles," said Hansalt with exaggerated politeness to Maia and Léka. "I had quite forgotten."

"Gently, gently," grumbled Igrunka again.

The sailor Grishin burst out laughing, rolling his head from side to side and closing his eyes.

"Well done, 'pon my word," he muttered, "one for you from the gentleman!"

Kulomzin prudently cut in, remarking that this prematurely hot weather was quickening the apple-trees into bloom, that there might still be some frosts which would kill the blossoms. Old Ojoguin took the cue and for the moment peace was restored.

Hansalt was eyeing the two girls voluptuously. Igrunka's face was redder than his dolman.

"My fists are itching to give this bounder a sound hiding," he said in a low voice to Kotik.

"Leave him alone," said Kotik, "he is an influential member of the local Soviet. His friend and schoolfellow, Putchkoff, is commissar of our government."

After dinner Igrunka did not leave Maia's side for a moment. He was afraid to trust her alone with Hansalt.

A cool evening had followed the hot April day.

Nightingales were singing in the depths of the garden. A smell of damp earth rose from the flower beds.

Several village boys, invited by Kulomzin, had joined the young people. They were organising a choir. The young fellows were casting ugly glances at Hansalt. Igrunka knew that they were jealous of his successes with the village girls.

The light was fading. The church bells were ringing. It was the solemn moment of Christ's burial . . . the procession was leaving the church.

At the Ojoguin's, the family, the communists and their village guests, were assembled in the big drawing-room. Kulomzin sat at the piano, softly running his fingers over the keys, improvising. Maia and Léka walked up and down the room, arm in arm. Hansalt sat in an armchair, Grishin, Pantiukhin and Mordkin had taken places on the sofa; the village boys stood beside them. Evguénia Romanovna sat in a corner by the window knitting a stocking. She was listening to the bells ringing in the village and casting uneasy glances at Kulomzin. She wanted to ask him not to play, but was afraid of offending a young man who might be useful.

"Maia, won't you sing something?" said Kulomzin.

"The Bold Merchant," suggested Hansalt, naming a popular song.

"Maria Nikolaievna sings that song delightfully," said Mordkin.

"Why, comrades," said Maia, "it is Good Friday, one mustn't sing to-day."

"Maia keeps to old customs," said Hansalt, winking to the village boys. "She cannot forget her education —she is a daughter of a nobleman."

"She is very religious," said one of the village boys with a sigh.

"Why does she call them 'comrades'?" thought Igrunka. "She makes up to them. It is disgusting!"

"Come, boys, let us have a chorus."

"But, Maria Nikolaievna is right. One mustn't sing to-day."

"What old prejudices," said Hansalt, coming up to the piano.

"We have no prejudices," said the young fellow with an offended air, "but it isn't right to do it."

Hansalt shrugged his shoulders.

"You even think it isn't right to make love to a girl, well, Jenia," he said, putting his hand on the back of Kulomzin's chair, "let's sing something pious to please them."

Hansalt began:

"These evening bells, these evening bells,
How many a tale their music tells."

Carried away by the charm of his thrilling, impassioned voice and his pale inspired face, the village boys, Maia, Léka and Kotik softly accompanied him:

"Bim-Bom, Bim-Bom, Bim-Bom . . ."

"Ah, but this is all nonsense, comrades," said Hansalt, suddenly breaking the spell. "And where I loved

. . . my father's home. . . . One can love everywhere, and the home of your forefathers has nothing to do with it. The ancient Romans used to say: '*ubi bene, ibi patria*'—'Our home is there where we are happy.' They understood things. Our Workmen and Peasants' Government is about to pass a law concerning the socialisation of women. One will be free to choose. . . . I shall choose Maia."

"You forget yourself," cried Igrunka, stepping up to him with closed fists. "I beg you to leave the room at once,—if you don't know how to behave in decent company."

Evguénia Romanovna hurriedly got up and made a few steps in the direction of Igrunka's chair.

"Igrunka" she said, "this is no business of yours. Leave him alone, will you."

"It is you who are forgetting yourself," said Hansalt, who had grown very pale. "Who are you after all? A 'saboteur'! May be a partisan of Korniloff? A Counter-Revolutionary?"

"Be quiet, Hansalt," said Kulomzin. "Why mix up politics with a private quarrel?"

"You are a mercenary toad!" said Igrunka deliberately, folding his arms on his breast.

"You shall answer for this, comrade!"

"I am at your orders, where and whenever you like," calmly replied Igrunka.

"Oh, I don't mean a duel! I don't go in for that old stuff. Come along, boys, . . . let's be off to the village. Let's enjoy ourselves. As to you, . . . you

shall know what it means to insult a representative of the Soviet Government. I shall take my full revenge."

"Why, comrade," said Mordkin, "there is nothing to quarrel about. One of you said something, the other retorted. It happens in every discussion."

"You dirty cur," said Igrunka, leaving the room.

"You just wait, we'll yet get even with you," cried Hansalt after him.

## XI.

The night and day that followed passed undisturbed. Evguénia Romanovna and her daughters, Kotik and Igrunka were preparing for church. Kulomzin and his staff had refused to appear at the Easter midnight service, declaring that they would rather go to bed.

Night was softly descending on the steppe—a calm and solemn Easter night. The church bells were ringing. The village was full of noise and movement. Dogs were barking furiously. Carts rattled along the road taking peasants from the neighboring villages to church. Igrunka had spread out his scarlet dolman and the "pelisse woven of clouds" on his bed. He pictured himself entering church and taking place by the side of Maia. It was the first time he would wear his pelisse. He had decided to beg Maia to tell her parents everything after church and insist on being married on the Sunday after Easter. As a member of the family, he would be able to turn Hansalt out of the house. He did not attach any great importance to the latter's threats.

A knock at the window pane made him turn round. It was Maia. They had agreed upon this signal when it was necessary for them to talk something over in private. Igrunka knew what it meant: he was to go

to the garden and wait for Maia under the lilac trees. He ran out to meet her. She was already there, in the transparent shadow of the budding branches, dressed all in white for church.

"Igrunka, my darling, . . . be quick. Put on your field shirt and your greatcoat and run to the stables. I shall wait for you there."

"What has happened, Maia?"

But Maia had already disappeared.

A candle was burning in a copper candlestick in the box of the stallion "Caracalla." The door of the box was open. Maia was saddling the horse. When Igrunka entered the box, she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him on the lips and cheeks, trembling with emotion.

"My darling," she whispered, "you must fly! They have just found Hansalt dead behind the windmill. Somebody, probably one of the village boys, has killed him and hidden his body in the bushes. Kulomzin said it was you who had done it. I heard the sailor Grishin ask for your immediate arrest. I was in father's study. They were all assembled in the drawing-room and held council there . . . Kulomzin, Grishin, Pantiukhin and Mordkin. Kulomzin presided over the council. Grishin demanded that you should be executed immediately, during the midnight service, in order to make an impression on the people. Kulomzin and Mordkin were against capital punishment. I heard them vote. You were sentenced to be put to death without delay. Kulomzin and Grishin have gone

to fetch the red soldiers. I ran out to warn you. You must go at once. No one will be able to overtake you on Caracalla. It is only twenty versts from here to the Cossack frontier. I have heard that the Cossacks have risen against the Bolsheviks."

She led Caracalla out of his box. The candle flickered, dark shadows ran along the walls.

"Get on him, darling, gallop hard. God keep and guard you! And I have to let you go like this, on Easter night, to wander in the steppe, . . . without food or shelter . . .!"

She made the sign of the cross and with an awkward gesture timidly blessed Igrunka, pressing him to go.

"Quick, be quick, my love, my darling! Later on, when all this is over you will come back. I will keep my word, I shall be faithful to you. . . You must go now. . . I shall lock up the stables and hasten to church. Luckily, I have had time to dress, and no one will suspect your flight."

She was there, standing in front of Igrunka, looking like a bride in her white dress trimmed with lace, with a white ribbon in her hair. Her voice was soft and caressing. She seemed so small by the side of the giant Caracalla, slender and ethereal, like an apparition.

"God keep you and guard you."

She held the bridle firmly with one little hand, presenting the stirrup to the young man with the other.

She pressed her cheek, and then her lips to his knee. Her eyes were full of tears. She waved her hand.

"Quick, I must be in church before I am missed!"

She led the way, candle in hand, opened the door leading into the riding school and on to the courtyard, and pushed the gates open.

"You must go down the ravine and turn to the left, then go up again . . . the stars will guide you and show you the south. The steppe begins behind the village."

"The Lord be with you!"

Igrunka was silent. His chin trembled and his teeth were chattering. He was afraid of bursting into tears.

"Thank you, Maia!" He bent down in his saddle and kissed the young girl on the lips. She returned his kiss passionately. A moment more, . . . he would have jumped off his horse and would have remained with her, with his beloved, braving death for the sake of her.

But Caracalla had moved. Maia once more pressed her lips to the young man's knee.

"Don't forget me, Igrunka, my darling!"

"I shall not forget you, Maia, my beloved."

Caracalla suddenly bounded down the road. Igrunka was almost thrown out of the saddle. The flame of the candle and the girl in white had disappeared. Old Caracalla was going down the ravine, snorting and stepping very carefully. Overhead the stars twinkled, indicating the way. The sound of the Easter-bells trembled in the air and rose to the sky. They were celebrating midnight mass in the village church. Would Maia be in time for it?

The young man's lips still burnt with her kiss. The stallion was stepping firmly on the narrow path that wound along the bottom of the ravine. There was a smell of rotten leaves and of earth. From time to time Caracalla struck a flint stone with his hoof and went on noiselessly, lightly carrying the young man on his back.

What was in store for him? Torture and death? Battles and victories? Life was before him. He thought of the past, full of color and romance, of the future—mysterious and full of interest, of extraordinary adventures.

What is there behind this dip? In the steppe where he could see in the distance the red flame of a camp fire? What would the morrow bring? What would happen in the course of the next year? Had he still many years to live, or would he soon follow Hansalt to the grave? Who had killed Hansalt? They had taken advantage of Igrunka's quarrel with him. They had killed him and let the guilt fall upon Igrunka! Hansalt was dead! But he, Igrunka, was alive!

These magic words; "I am alive," sounded like a triumphal cry in his heart and made it beat with joy. And he heard in answer the sound of the distant church-bells and the soft humming of the earth, the nocturnal song of the steppe.

## XII.

A YEAR had passed. To Igrunka it had been a year of the gayest and closest companionship with dauntless, dashing lads like himself. He had been as though under the influence of the fumes of some sparkling, strong wine, for he had tasted the bliss of victory, sweeter than which there is no other. There had been no time for reflection—all his time had been mapped out for him to the very last minute of the day. New regiments of the young army of the Don had been forming, and Igrunka had joined the one where his brother Oleg, a boy still in his teens, was serving. Both the Cossacks and the young officers who had joined them during the revolution, were burning with love for their country, and Igrunka had entirely merged in the regiment and assimilated with them. Whether on duty or not, at work or resting in the warm summer evenings under the shady acacias of the camp, listening to the songs of the Cossacks, it had seemed to him that he was no longer Igrunka Kusskoff, a youth of barely twenty, but something tremendously strong and powerful, that breathed with a thousand lungs, throbbed with a thousand hearts and was called "the regiment."

One day, however, his friend de Roberti, Lieutenant

in the Tchernobylsky Hussars, in which they had served together, came to see him and mysteriously announced that the colors of the regiment had arrived and the regiment was being formed under the command of Captain Brovtzin, in the region of the Cossacks of the Kuban, where the Army of General Denikin was operating.

Igrunka felt both sad and happy. He had grown attached to the Cossacks and was loath to leave them, but the thought of joining his regiment filled his heart with joy. It was on this flag that he had taken the oath of allegiance to his country and his regiment.

Night was falling when he reached one of the great "stanitzas" or villages of the Kuban. A fragrant perfume rose from the steppe and from dooryards where lilacs bloomed. The white "hatas"—peasant cottages —with their thatched or iron roofs, seemed to be smothered in the thick foliage of their gardens. There had been a storm in the day time; it had rained heavily, leaving a sweet smell rising from the damp earth. A soldier of the Volunteer Army showed him the way to the house occupied by the officer in command of the regiment. Igrunka dismounted, giving Caracalla into the charge of his orderly, and walked along the wooden planks that led to the entrance of the "hata," bending under the drooping lilac branches laden with blossoms. He pushed the door open and entered a wide gallery, smelling of mint and dill, with heavy chests placed against the wall. A narrow strip of homespun carpet was stretched along the wooden floor.

Igrunka coughed. There was no answer. He walked along the gallery and saw a door on his left. He opened it and stopped on the threshold. The room, with its two tall windows with muslin curtains, was half dark. Several officers were kneeling beside a monumental bed, placed against the wall, with piled up pillows. Their backs were turned to him, but he recognised them all: Captains Brovtzin and Dubrovin, First Lieutenant de Roberti, First Lieutenant Pavloff, nick-named "the fly," Bobrovsky, Gronsky and—Kotik Ojoguin. None of them turned their heads at his entrance. They remained kneeling beside the bed, upon which, carefully spread out on the red eiderdown quilt, were the colors of the regiment.

After a moment, they all rose to their feet.

The eldest of the officers, Captain Brovtzin, who had been appointed to command the regiment, turned round. Igrunka saw a thin, dark face with a deep scar on the cheek and pale grey eyes that seemed to gaze into space. They rested for a moment on Igrunka, and the young man read in them such a tale of woe and suffering, blended with an indomitable will, that he involuntarily lowered his glance.

"Gentlemen," said Brovtzin in a hoarse, strangled voice—he was not used to speaking low—"this flag was carried in front of our regiment when the Tchernobylsky Hussars made their triumphant entrance into Paris. . ."

He paused, . . . as though looking for words.

"Into Paris . . .," he repeated, "Now we must live

to attain the blessed day when we shall enter Moscow, our sacred capital, under this flag. Moscow, where scoundrels and Jews now reign. Gentlemen, let us swear to be faithful to the traditions of our forefathers and of our fathers, let us swear to serve loyally our God, our Czar and our country and never to forsake our banner of St. George."

"We swear," said the officers in a low voice, making the sign of the cross.

"Tomorrow, gentlemen, we shall celebrate a Te Deum in the church of the stanitza, and then we shall proceed to form the regiment.

Captain Brovtzin bowed. The officers turned round and saw Igrunka. They welcomed him warmly.

That evening Igrunka sat with Kotik on a bench in front of the Cossack hata. The heart of the young man was heavy as he listened.

"Soon after your departure from Spassofka," said Kotik, "Kulomzin was replaced in the Soviet by Saénko, the son of the village blacksmith, a gloomy youth of eighteen. It was decided to turn us out of our house and hand it over to the proletariat. Father was accused of counter-revolutionary plots and of being in communication with the Cossacks. The house was searched and turned upside down, we all were arrested and taken to Kharkoff, where we were put into prison. . . Father and mother were shot. Léka was laid up with typhoid fever and soon died of it. There only remained Maia and myself. The local millionaire, Bardij, interceded for us. He oc-

cupied an influential position in the food committee of the district. He bribed the members of the Extraordinary Commission, and we were let out on bail. He proposed to Maia. . ."

"But he is old," interrupted Igrunka.

"He is about forty."

"I remember him—a stout, slovenly man."

"He saved our lives," said Kotik.

"Did Maia consent?"

"Yes, but she begged him to put the wedding off."

"Kotik, do you know that she . . ."

"Yes, I know," said Kotik. "She promised to marry you. But who could foretell that events would take this turn?"

"Well, go on. . ."

"When the Cossacks were approaching Kharkoff, Bardij fled with us. I went to Kieff, to Hetman Skoropadsky, and later on I came here. . ."

"And Maia?" asked Igrunka in a stifled voice.

"She is now in the Crimea, in safety, with Bardij."

"Are they married?"

"No, the wedding is put off until winter. Bardij wants to wind up his affairs and to be married in Constantinople. He does not believe in the success of the Volunteer Army."

"I shall go to the Crimea!" exclaimed Igrunka. "This marriage shall not take place. She has given me her word. She belongs to me."

"Well . . . and the regiment?"

"The regiment?" repeated Igrunka as if in a dream.

"You have just sworn to be faithful to it, and to enter Moscow under its colors."

"Is it you who say this, Kotik? Have you forgotten all you said to me at Spassofka, when you advised me to think of myself and my own happiness?"

"I was a boy then; I am a man now. I was weak—I have been hardened in battle."

The moon was rising higher and higher above the gardens; a white mist enveloped the stanitza like a bridal veil; the tall poplars were like enormous wax candles in the silvery moonlight. Nightingales were singing; the dark vaults of the trees were full of mystery, and the air was redolent with the aromatic perfume of lilacs. A swarm of thoughts and recollections flitted through the young man's brain. His mother's words came back to his memory:

"There is Heaven and earth," she had said to him. "There are eternal and transient feelings. Earthly love for a woman is a transient feeling. It comes and goes. But love for God, for your Czar, for your country is eternal, it cannot change. Suvoroff used to say: 'Fame is like smoke. Everything is vanity. You will only find rest at the foot of God's Altar.' Do not run after fame, my boy, but guard your honor. Let your name be obscure, but honest."

After the revolution, when he had been leaving with Kotik for the estate of the Ojoguins, she had said to him: "Don't let yourself be troubled by the Emperor's abdication. Don't be disturbed when you are told that we have no Emperor, that he has been killed.

God in Heaven, the Czar on earth and your country, cannot be killed. We may have to live through troubled times, it will seem as though God had forsaken us, there will be no Emperor and our country will be abased and trampled upon. But this will only be temporary. God, your Czar and your country are things eternal, and it is honest to love them and serve them and give up your life for them. All the rest is vanity."

Igrunka stayed with his regiment.

## XIII.

In summer, with loud hurrahs rising from the red trucks of their train, the Tchernobylsky Hussars, three squadrons strong, had left for the Ukraine, where Denikin's army had taken the offensive.

A new phase had begun in Igrunka's life. The enemy—Russian soldiers, in their grey shirts, with their tightly rolled greatcoats slung over their shoulders—were fleeing under the pressure of English tanks and the Infantry of the Volunteer Army. The Cavalry, which counted among them also a brigade consisting of the Tchernobylsky and Polovetzk regiments, followed on his heels. Convoys of provisions, goods and spirits were captured, prisoners were taken, towns, villages, hamlets were liberated, and, wherever the Volunteers appeared, they were met with blessings, smiles, embraces, the sign of the cross and the singing of the Easter hymn "Christ is risen."

White-blue-and-red bunting fluttered in the air, church bells clanged and boomed, priests in gold canonicals, surrounded by choristers, women, children and old men, stood in front of the churches. Above—the hot blue sky, a grace of God, poured down rays of light on bared grey heads, and the solemn peal of

bells resounded in the air. There were hymns, pious sighing, bliss and laughter.

"They have come, . . . they have saved us. . . they have set us free. . . . The Saints! The Volunteers!"

Beyond the towns and villages lay the steppe with its ravines, stacks of wheat in sheaves, distant clouds of dust of troops on the move, machine-guns, the whistling and smacking of bullets. War was being waged as it was a hundred years ago. Cavalry reigned supreme on the battlefields. Captain Brovtzin led the attack tearing along on his black stallion, a thoroughbred, in front of the second squadron, which was Igrunka's,—a conspicuous figure, not easily forgotten, with his scarlet cap pushed far to the back of his head, his hand clutching his sabre and a heavy Mauser pistol strapped to his hip. Behind him followed his hussars, sweeping along in battle array. A motley crowd they were, too, in the diversity of the head gear they displayed. Some of them wore the bashlyk of Daghestan dangling down their backs, others the scarlet regulation cap of the Tchernobylsky Hussars, while others again wore the tall lambskin busbies of the Cossacks, or the low caps of the Kabarda, or the khaki field caps of the Russian Army, and even English sporting caps. Only the uniform scarlet shoulder-straps of the Tchernobylsky regiment and the chevrons of the Russian national colors denoted that this mass of horsemen was one family.

They were all animated by the same passionate im-

petus to fight and to win. Brovtzin had earned the nickname of "Killer," because he used to despatch with his own hand the Red officers and commissars who were taken prisoners.

"They are traitors to my sovereign," he said, "they have sold my country to the Jews, they have committed their souls to the devil, let God judge them."

And his eyes glistened with the cold glitter of steel.

"Are they ready, Danilytch?" he used to ask, entering a village after a battle.

"Ready, Your Honor," the stalwart old sergeant-major would say. "They are waiting on the common."

To the common then they would go, Brovtzin with a Colt pistol in his hand and followed by the sergeant-major. There they would find the prisoners drawn up in a single rank. Slowly, with a heavy tread, the captain would pass along the front, his grey eyes piercing the very souls of the Red Army men.

"To the right, . . . to the left, . . . to the right, . . . a fine soldier, I see, making a fool of yourself by fighting against us! . . . A commissar? To the left. A Red officer? . . . To the left. A communist? . . . To the left."

And then . . . the dry barks of pistol shots, as passing behind the backs of those who had been ordered to stand to the left, he would shoot them in the neck.

"Have this carrion taken away, it should not contaminate the air!" he would say in a low, tired voice to the sergeant-major when it was over.

When the regiment was resting there were funeral services in the daytime.

They had buried "the fly," Lieutenant Pavloff, and also the hero—Prince Piegasheff. The Red soldiers had killed his horse under him and had wanted to take him prisoner, but he had shot four of them with his revolver and had killed himself, firing the fifth shot into his mouth. . . Funerals and funeral services had become the order of the day whenever the regiment was resting.

And at night the village would ring with the tunes of dashing hussar songs and the sounds of cymbals and tambourines, and the loving-cup would go round merrily.

Death and blood, song and wine had fused all together into one family, and Igrunka did not feel his heart in those summer days. It glowed with a sweet fire.

Igrunka woke up—a fly had got into his mouth, he choked, began to cough and opened his eyes. His orderly had hung his overcoat before the window the night before, but it was light in the room.

The rays of the morning sun had found their way through chinks and the slit of the overcoat and spread in golden patches over the floor and the whitewashed walls. Flies were circling about, jostling each other in the light of these patches and droning monotonously.

On the festive occasion of the arrival of the Volunteers the mud floor had been strewn with some kind of herb which sent out a sweet, pungent smell.

Igrunka reached for his watch which was lying on a chair on the back of which were spread his uniform and accoutrements. It was a gold wrist-watch. Somebody else's watch. It belonged to a commissar taken prisoner the other day, and Igrunka had bought it from a soldier. The bed on which he was lying, a little too short for his size with its quilt of a multicolored oriental pattern, was somebody else's too. And the hut in which he was sleeping, . . . goodness knew whose it was!

It was seven o'clock. At nine they were to march. They were retreating. It had become necessary to stop fighting in order to rest and fill up their depleted ranks. Out of the nineteen officers who had started with the regiment from the Caucasus and Kuban, only five remained. Fourteen had been killed or were lying wounded in hospitals or had died of typhoid fever. Out of three squadrons only one was left, and even that was scarcely sixty men strong:—the regiment had practically ceased to exist.

Igrunka stretched himself, let his legs hang down from his bed and smiled amusedly. "I am blessed if I am not a blooming communist!" he thought. "In a minute I am going to have tea that is not mine, and then I am going to ride a horse that is not mine either —even the saddle is someone else's." His mount was no longer Caracalla. The poor brute had suffered severely from the campaign and become quite unfit for further service in the field. He had been obliged to leave him in a village somewhere near Korotcha.

Instead he had a black horse,—black was the color of the regiment,—of a nondescript breed. There was scarcely anything he could really call his own.

Through the door, behind the mud wall, he could hear people talking and the clatter of crockery in the next room.

"That must be Sofia Ivanovna making tea for us," he said to himself and smiled again as it struck him that "Sister" Sofia Ivanovna Serebrennikova was not their's either, but someone else's "sister." She had attached herself to the regiment in the village of Bielaya Gora where she had met Brovtzin, an old acquaintance. She had won the men with her kind ways of a true Russian matron and had been constantly with the regiment, tending with womanly simplicity the sick and the wounded, helping the officers and looking after their needs and their food.

No one received any pay. As a rule there was no time to hunt for the paymaster—either he could not be found, or else he had no money to give them. There was no officers' mess—anything they were in need of would be taken from the population. Sometimes the people, as a tribute to the bravery of the hussars, would give everything they wanted of their own free will. If that did not happen, things were requisitioned by force.

"What a life!" Igrunka thought and laughed bitterly as he was dressing. "Fight and be killed straightaway or be taken prisoner and put to torture. And

what if your men play you false and simply march you off to the Reds?"

And he could not restrain himself from calling back to his memory the corpses of officers he had seen, with shoulder-straps cut out of the skin of their shoulders and nails driven into the bared flesh in imitation of the starlets which indicated their rank, or with stripes of skin ripped off all along their legs in burlesque imitation of the wide red trouser-stripes of the Cossacks, or with knocked out teeth and smashed finger-joints. The pain of death was constantly lying in wait for them, and, therefore, a future did not exist. They did not think of "to-morrow." "To-morrow" meant death, and nobody cared to think of death. There was only a "to-day," the enjoyment of which was intense.

The young women and girls of the liberated cities and villages, the country gentlewomen, schoolgirls and schoolmistresses, all the "Whites" who had been set free by them, seemed to understand just as it was understood by the liberators and the Volunteers, that there was no "to-morrow" for them. To-day flags are flying, bells are ringing, all sing "Christ is risen," there is music that has not been heard for a long time, there are soldier songs. To-morrow, if, God forbid, the Volunteers should retreat, people will inform against each other, there will be spying, prison, death and torture. That is why they put on their best clothes, why they were so lavish with their hospitality, went to cafés and restaurants, cinemas and theatres, why

they laughed and talked while the laughing was still good and talking was still allowed.

To-day—the Volunteers; to-morrow—the Bolsheviks, Petlura, Makhno, or simply a savage horde of the robber "Greens," turned beasts.

Marriages were made on the spur of the moment, weddings were celebrated and even children had time to be born in this horrible, rambling chaos. No sooner would the news arrive that the husband with whom she had spent but a short "honey-week" was dead, than the widow would be quite prepared to marry anew. Widows and girls were all too prone to fall a prey to the caresses of the sunburnt stalwarts who were standing on the threshold between life and death. On days of rest, it was easy to find amusement and Igrunka did not go out of its way. Maia's image was becoming dim in his memory under the veneer of other confused images, possible only in those impossible days.

Under the impression of those kaleidoscopic changes of locality, of people and of feminine caresses, of this constant readiness to obey the call of death and also of the necessity of living the life of a "white communist," without anything that he could call his own, his heart could not but harden, a new mentality could not but arrive.

And there was nothing strange in the fact that Sofia Serebrennikova, like some stray dog, had adopted the regiment, that she fed everybody and looked after

everybody's needs, that she was strict in her ways and that Brovtzin, that antisocial and morose "Killer," would brighten up in her presence.

## XIV.

Breakfast was laid in the next room, where, on a table covered with a white cloth, a small copper samovar was cheerfully hissing. There were hot, home-made "korjiks" or scones, and hard-boiled eggs on gaily colored earthenware plates, a jar of fresh milk and a dish of corned beef, cut in slices. Brovtzin, in his field-shirt, his sword buckled to his side, sat at the table, drinking tea. Sofia Nikolaévna moved softly and noiselessly about the room, putting away the remainder of the provisions, getting clean cups and saucers out of the cupboard in the wall. She was tall, with a handsome sun-tanned face and big brown eyes. Her hair was hidden by her white nurse's cap. She was over thirty and inclined to be stout, but as agile as a young girl. She went up to the ikons, got upon a chair without the slightest effort, and took down the little lamp that burnt in front of them.

"This wick is much too thick for the lamp," she said.

Her voice was soft and musical. There was something restful in it.

She had become a nurse, by inclination, at the age of seventeen, long before the war. All through the war she had lived in hospitals with the soldiers. When

the revolution broke out, she fearlessly mixed with the crowd of savage, brutal men who had renounced God and cursed their Czar and their country, and spoke to them in a quiet, even voice about God, their Czar and their country. They let her speak and did not harm her. The prophecy contained in the 91st Psalm, seemed fulfilled: *A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. . . Thou shalt go upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the adder thou shalt tread under thy feet. . . Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunter, and from the noisome pestilence.*

Her heart was broken. At the beginning of the war, she repeated, whenever she heard the report of a gun: "This shell may kill Sereja . . ."—and her fiancé was killed under her eyes. The hardest work did not frighten her. She courted death and was always in the midst of danger. She had a special talent for talking to the soldiers. The Red commissars were afraid of her, and the Tcheka did not arrest her. Those who knew her looked upon her as a saint.

Sofia Nikolaévna had readjusted the wick and lighted the lamp.

"It is a great feast-day to-day, Constantin Pétrovitch," she said, "the Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord. And we have nowhere to pray. The church is demolished and the priest has been killed."

"Nowhere to pray?" said Brovtzin, holding out his hand to Igrunka, who had just entered the room. "I

am afraid Russia has forgotten all her prayers. It is a country upon which the curse of God has fallen."

"No," said Sofia Nikolaévna gently, while Igrunka respectfully kissed her hand. "You must not call her that. Russia is miserable, . . . but God will not forsake her. He will forgive her and return to her, and all shall be well again. Russia is not like any other country. You cannot apply any ordinary measure to her. Sit down, Igrunka, I will give you some tea."

Brovtzin looked at her keenly.

"You condemn me for my severity, Sofia Nikolaévna," he said at last with an effort.

"I do not condemn you," said Sofia Nikolaévna, her eyes glistening with tears, "but I am afraid you may make a mistake and execute those who are innocent."

"I shall never make a mistake," said Brovtzin hoarsely, "I know them too well."

Sofia Nikolaévna did not answer. Igrunka made a movement as though to get up. Brovtzin laid his heavy, shaggy brown hand on the young man's shoulder and said:

"Stay, Igrunka, if you have nothing else to do. I want you to know everything. Listen, Sofia Nikolaévna, and you, Igrunka, listen and try to remember. Christ taught us to love and forgive our enemies. He taught us to love our neighbors and give up our lives for them. He taught us to forgive those who offend us. I want you to know, Sofia Nikolaévna, that I do not take revenge for what they have done to me. They killed my old father in the presence of

my mother, they broke her arms and legs and threw her into a dried up well, at the bottom of which she lay sighing and moaning for three days, until death released her. They dishonored my sister and the girl I was to marry, and then killed them. They deprived me of everything I possessed. I have forgiven them. All this was mine. The Brovtzins lived, for two hundred years, the life of the rich and noble among them, and that annoyed them. They got the power and took their revenge. I understood—and forgave them. We belonged to two opposite camps. We knew that war was inevitable. They have won, . . . it is their luck, and I bear them no grudge. But there are some actions which Christ will not forgive and which I cannot forgive."

He paused for a moment and drew a long breath.

"You say, Sofia Nikolaévna, that Russia is a miserable country. It was not always so. There was my regiment—the Tchernobylsky Hussars. There were six squadrons and a machine-gun troop. Smart, stalwart men, all of them, mounted on fine black horses . . . ready to die 'for their faith, their Czar and their country.' It was not a 'miserable' regiment, I can assure you. Can you call what remains of it, and what bears at present its name, a regiment? They have destroyed it. I cannot understand how this 'miserable' Russia, as you call her, could destroy it. I can understand the Jews, and it is easier for me to forgive them than it is to understand and to forgive those who cut down the branch that supported them. You see what

remains: a wandering troop of 'white communists,' living in requisitioned houses, riding horses that do not belong to them, eating other people's bread. It is in the name of Russia, of my Emperor, of the Army, of my regiment, that I take revenge, and my revenge is agreeable to God. I cleanse and purify Russia of all those who have destroyed her and who want to go on destroying and polluting her."

"The Bolsheviks exterminate the 'bourjouis'," said Sofia Nikolaévna.

"And I exterminate the proletarians."

"What will remain then?"

"Russia, cleansed of all harmful elements. The 'bourjouis' have degenerated, Sofia Nikolaévna. The landowners who used to toil have become exploiters who only think of spending their money. And the parasite-proletarians are just as harmful. When I walk along the front and see those who are hopelessly depraved, I send them to their grave. The Bolsheviks cut down the overgrown trees, I pull out the weeds."

"You are of the opinion, then, that the work of the Bolsheviks is useful to Russia?"

Brovtzin did not answer.

"May be you are right after all," said Sofia Nikolaévna. "The Bolsheviks have been sent us by God as a punishment for our sins. Their persecution of the church will bring us back to God. The Bolsheviks, who tortured and killed the Czar, will make us return to our allegiance to the Monarch; the Bolsheviks, who

persecute Russia, will awaken in our hearts the love for our country."

"Igrunka," said Brovtzin, "the regiment will rest for a month near Kharkoff. You may go to the Crimea. I have heard that you have some business to transact there."

"Thank you, Sir," said Igrunka, "but . . . I am afraid you will take Moscow while I am away?"

Brovtzin fixed sad eyes upon Igrunka and said in a low voice.

"Without the Emperor, we shall not take Moscow. And if we do take it, we shall not be able to keep it. I am afraid we shall be obliged to retreat. The Red Army is growing stronger every day. Officers of the former Imperial Army are working with it. If it were not for them! I can neither understand nor forgive them. If it were not for them . . . we could win easily, and we should be able to come to an agreement."

That very evening Igrunka, with the help of Sofia Nikolaévna, got permission to travel in a sanitary train that was bound for Lozovaia, and started for the Crimea.

## XV.

A GLORIOUS morning on the beach at Simeiz, in the Crimea. The sun has risen high above the sea, and the blue waves shine and glitter like sapphire and molten gold. A storm has been raging during the night with thunder, lightning and rain; it has freshened the air, and the sea is gradually growing calmer. The waves chase one another, emerald-green and dark-blue: they roll and die away on the beach. Two high rocks rise from the sea. One of them is pink, towering like a mountain, with cliffs and spurs, and a flat summit which looks as if its top had been cut off aslant. The other one—pointed and sharp—rises straight out of the water, quite close to the shore. If you look at it through half-closed eyelids, blinking at the sun, this rock looks like a giant monk with a cowl. Pink mountains, covered with dusty shrubs, rise behind the beach. To the left, the round bay is closed in by steep cliffs and heaps of rock emerging from the sea.

The air is saturated with the smell of brine, seaweed, fish and tar, while whiffs of iodoform, creosol, and something like a vague smell of decaying corpses rise from the land. Since the beginning of the war the Crimea has been full of hospitals and nursing-homes. Everywhere are emaciated figures, pale and wan faces with cavernous eyes that seem to gaze at

you from another world, some of them meek and gentle, and others full of wrath and reproach. Maia Ojoguin is, of course, sorry for them, but thinks they would be better off elsewhere. It is difficult to find a spot on the beach without meeting these men in old and torn hospital clothes, with slippers on their bare feet. Cigarette ends, crumpled papers, empty tins lie about everywhere.

Maia is lying on the beach close to the sea abandoning herself to the reviving rays of the sun. Her smart, very snug, bathing suit emphasizes the beauty of her shapely body. Her arms are bare. So are her legs, tanned by the sun. A small blue cap covers her hair. Jenia Golembovsky, a youth of about twenty, an undergraduate of the University of Rostoff, at present a volunteer in the army of General Denikin, sits on a flat stone by her side. He also wears a bathing suit.

"Strange," muses Maia. "A little while ago he would have been arrested for appearing in such a costume in public. He has practically nothing on at all. But nowadays one has become used to it."

Jenia has just recovered from typhoid fever. His long lank body is terribly thin. Maia looks at his hunched-up back with its protruding yellow vertebrae, at his thin white legs with traces of boils, at his bony knees.

"How ugly men are, she thinks, admiring her own shapely legs, and pink skin shining like satin.

Jenia is her A.D.C. He is desperately in love with her. Well, let him. . . Is it a crime to be beautiful

and happy at the present time? Yesterday a half-drunken officer had winked at her in the tea-room and said: "Eh, here is the wife of Bardij! Come and sit by me, my pretty!" Insolent fellow! He ought to be arrested and judged by his fellow-officers, and handed over to the Bolsheviks. "The wife of Bardij!"

They are not married, but they live together like man and wife. It is the way just at present. They call it: "insuring one's fate." Bardij is accused of being a speculator. But what does his crime consist of after all? He goes from the Crimea to Constantinople and back in a boat which he has specially chartered. He buys sugar, wine and brandy in Constantinople and sells them to the hospitals and the army in Sebastopol. Is it so very wicked of him? Everyone serves the army as he can. Capiton Davidovitch cannot be a soldier. His nerves and his constitution prevent. He is simply a clever man, not a profiteer. They call every clever man a profiteer just now. He has saved her life. Maia lifts her hand and admires the three rings—pearl, ruby and sapphire, that glitter in the sun. Capiton Davidovitch has made her a present of them as a sign of her fidelity to the Volunteer Army.

"May be it is heartless of me to have so soon forgotten the tortures and death of my father and mother! But what can I do? My tears will not bring them back to life. If I had remained in Kharkoff, I should have died of typhoid fever, like my sister Léka, or else I should once more have been put into prison. Girls are in great danger there! They say Capiton

Davidovitch was wrong in serving with the Bolsheviks. It would have been wrong of him to serve in the Red Army, or in the Tcheka, but he traded under the Bolsheviks . . . and he saved my life, and that of my brother Kotik. If I were forty or fifty, if I were not young and handsome, . . . I should not have minded dying there. But what would have been the sense of it? I want to live. I very much want to live. . . . I want to go to Yalta, eat ices, drink real tea worth its weight in gold. If no one else can give me all this, why should I not accept it from Capiton Davidovitch? People fled like fools, leaving everything behind them, even their passports. General Bielolipetzky is not even able to prove that he is a general. But Capiton Davidovitch took some documents with him when he fled from the Bolsheviks."

Maia knows nothing about documents or papers, but she knows that the English and the French offered him big sums of money in pounds and francs for those papers. Capiton Davidovitch fled with Maia in a comfortable carriage, with a pair of well-fed horses. They had a samovar and a travelling basket with cups, saucers, plates, knives and forks, a ham and a roast goose. It was not a flight, but a picnic. When they crossed the Bolshevik frontier Capiton Davidovitch shouted at the Red sentry and boxed his ears. Wasn't it brave of him? When they reached the line of the Volunteer Army, he insisted on being taken to the chief officer in command, and two days later he was received by the Minister of Commerce and was able to prove

to him that he was a cadet, not one of those "cadets" who are killed on the front and die in hospitals of wounds and typhoid fever, but a member of the Constitutional-Democratic party, one of those who are at present considered to be the leading men of Russia. And it appeared that everybody knew Capiton Davidovitch: Lebedeff and Zedler, and the President of the "Krug"—the Don Cossack Parliament—and the President of the "Rada"—the Kuban Cossack Parliament, and Ponomareff, and Gortchishin and Sidoroff. He read a report at some assembly or other. He is a business man, and not a profiteer. It is men like him, with small piercing, glistening eyes behind their spectacles, men who know everything and are capable of everything, that will save Russia, and not boys like Jenia, with spotty legs and eyes like a wounded gazelle!

Capiton Davidovitch has promised to take Maia to Constantinople. She will see The Golden Horn, Stambul, the Mosque of Saint Sofia, Pera, Galata, the Harem of the Sultan's wives, she will dine at Tokotlian's. . . Later on they will go to Rome and Paris. This is happiness indeed! If it were not for the revolution and the Bolsheviks, she would never have known such luck. She would have married Igrunka Kusskoff and would have lived in barracks at Proskuroff, she would have had lots of children and would have spent her time washing their clothes with the orderly's help, . . . brrrr, . . . she shuddered to think of it. Capiton Davidovitch taught her not to have any children. With him . . . she will become a globe-

trotter; she will drive about in a motorcar or fly in an aeroplane.

Capiton Davidovitch had said to her one day: "The 16th century was the time of knighthood, the 17th was the era of beauty, militarism marked the epoch of the 18th century and social utopias that of the 19th. The 20th century will be that of capital and commerce." Capiton Davidovitch is a university man and has connections everywhere. Fortune has smiled upon her, and it would be silly to turn her back upon it merely because her father and mother were tortured to death! Better be a live dog than a dead lion, says Capiton Davidovitch. He has promised to bring her a little Italian Lupetto. They are so small they can be carried about in a muff. It is just because he is so clever and so talented that people call him profiteer. They are exasperated by suffering, hunger and illness and are full of envy and malice.

"Jenia," says Maia in a languid voice, "tell me . . . is Capiton Davidovitch a profiteer?"

Jenia is silent and breathes heavily. He did not expect such a question.

"Well, Jenia, why don't you answer. Speak frankly, I want to know the truth."

"I have never thought about it," says Jenia in a low voice.

"You are very sly. You are afraid of offending me. Answer frankly—is he a profiteer, or not?"

"Really, Maria Nicolaievna. . . ."

"All right! I read your answer in your eyes. He

is a profiteer, and I am his wife. The wife of a profiteer!"

Maia heaves a deep sigh.

"And you are her A.D.C., Jenia. Poor knight!"

"Maria Nicolaievna! . . . How silly of me! There is someone looking for you. He asked me to give him your address, but I didn't. I thought perhaps you wouldn't like it."

"Who is it?"

"Lieutenant Kusskoff."

Maia raises herself on her elbow and sits up, staring at Jenia and shaking her head.

"Jenia, you are quite mad—Igrunka is here—and you don't tell me. Where is he? Run and fetch him, quick. Put on your clothes before you go, you are half-naked!"

She watches him with disgust while he awkwardly pulls on his boots and trousers.

"Bring him here. I shall lie in the sun. Give me my book and my umbrella."

"Which book, Maria Nicolaievna? There are two."

"How stupid you are! . . . the French one, of course, 'L'Homme qui Assassina,' by Claude Farrère!"

## XVI.

A HUGE wave came rolling on the beach and died away at Maia's feet. The warm water wetted her toes. She drew her feet away and laid her book aside. The silk parasol cast a pink reflection on her face. She stretched herself and closed her eyes.

"Igrunka will be here in a moment," she thought. "There will be an argument. How tiresome! He is a good boy, but good people are dull and out of date. What does he want? A hasty marriage in the church in Yalta, and after that . . . life in a requisitioned villa, sharing it with other grass-widows who fry American Red Cross bacon on a primus stove and wait for hours at the Commandant's office for their turn for a subsidy or rations? I have met enough of these officers' wives of the Volunteer Army. It was not worth while living with Capiton Davidovitch in order to end by marrying an officer of Denikin's army. It sounds very well in a story, but not in real life. Constantinople, Tokotlian, Paris are more in my line. It is time to have done with old-world prejudices and become a modern woman."

There was a sound of spurs and footsteps creaking on the sand. Maia opened her eyes and sat up.

Igrunka was advancing towards her, accompanied

by Jenia. He looked very handsome in his Russian shirt of military cut, with golden Hussar shoulder-straps, blue cavalry trousers and a faded scarlet cap at an angle, a cap that had seen many a battle. His high boots with gold rosettes, his spurs . . . the whole was so Russian, so martial and so familiar to her. She could not help admiring his brown young face, his big grey-blue eyes with dark eyelashes, his frank straightforward look, the curve of his lips and his firm chin.

Igrunka had improved in appearance and had grown into a man. The girl's haughty expression involuntarily softened, she smiled and two dimples appeared in her cheeks.

"Good-morning, young hero!" she said. "Excuse me for receiving you thus. The doctor has ordered me to lie in the sun. My nerves have been shattered by all I have gone through."

Maia held out her small brown hand to the young man, who bent down and kissed it.

"How beautiful you have grown, Maia," said Igrunka.

"Wasn't I beautiful before? Sit down, Igrunka, we have a great deal to talk about. How is my brother Kotik? Jenia, can't you see that you are in the way? Go and tell Suzanne to come here and dress me in an hour's time, and to prepare coffee for three. You may come too, Jenia."

"And so . . . you are a hero? I am glad. You are not comfortable there. A wave will come and

spoil your new trousers. Sit down on this stone, I want to admire you. You look very nice. You were only a baby when I saw you last . . . an impetuous boy. Ouh . . . ouh . . . ouh . . . how you hated the Bolsheviks! Are you still the same . . . a staunch monarchist, . . . yes?"

"My convictions and my feelings have not changed, Maia."

"Oh, as to that," she interrupted. "I know the kind of life you lead, you officers. I have seen enough of it. Confess it, you have loved many women in the towns you conquered?"

Igrunka blushed.

"Well, well. . . . I do not reproach you. You are young. As long as you don't let yourself be entangled in some trivial affair."

"Maia, I assure you . . . I love you as I loved you then, that night when you saddled Caracalla for me."

"And how is old Caracalla?"

"I had to leave him behind. He was done for."

"What a pity! He was a fine horse."

"Many things have perished."

"Yes, Igrunka, and they will never come back. What has been . . . will never be again."

"You mean . . . what took place at Spassofka?"

"Yes, . . . and Spassofka itself doesn't exist anymore. It has been burnt down by the peasants."

"I have heard of it. But Spassofka was an inanimate thing. There are other things that cannot perish. . . . A word given. . . ."

"I don't know what you mean," said Maia dryly.

"I mean that you have given me your word to be my wife . . . and that you are bound to keep it."

"Look here, Igrunka. Tell me quite frankly and honestly as you have always done: Have *you* kept your word? Have you never been unfaithful to me? . . . Not once? No," cried Maia, taking hold of Igrunka's hand, "don't lie to me. I do not want you to lie. Well, then, you must know that if you have not been able to keep yourself pure in the midst of all this nightmare, . . . neither have I!"

"Maia!"

"Yes, Igrunka, you must understand me."

"Bardij!"

Maia blushed violently.

"Maia, I cannot believe it, he is old!"

"He is not old for a man, only forty-two. He saved my life and Kotik's."

"Who is he? A Bolshevik? Maia, you cannot belong to that man, you, so beautiful and so pure!"

"Don't be childish, Igrunka. Life is not a romance, nor a fairy tale. Life is a very serious thing and a complicated affair. Especially at present, and we cannot guide it at will."

"Maia . . .!" said Igrunka, "I cannot believe it. It is too horrible!"

Maia got up and put down her umbrella. She suddenly felt ashamed of her bathing suit. She picked up her bath sheet and wrapped herself in it.

"Be calm, Igrunka."

"Maia, leave all this. Let us start to-day for Sebastopol and from there for Kharkoff, where we can be married."

"No, no, Igrunka, . . . it is impossible. I have been unfaithful to you; I have given myself to another, I belong to him, curse me if you will."

"Maia, . . . and your word?" said Igrunka, burying his face in his hands. "You have given it to me, and you can and must leave this man."

She saw his face grow pale under his tan. She lowered her eyelids.

"I thought you were killed," she lied.

"Leave all this, . . . follow me to the regiment."

"No, Igrunka, this cannot be. If it were only my promise, but there is more than that. . . . You would never forgive me."

She turned away from him and walked rapidly in the direction of her villa. The sheet had fallen from her shoulders. Bathed in sunlight . . . she came to an iron gate, opened it and disappeared, . . . like a goddess moulded in gold.

That night Igrunka started, in a fourth class carriage, from Sebastopol to Kharkoff, to rejoin his regiment.

## XVII.

The "Kornilovtzy" and the "Markovtzy" regiments, named after leaders of the Volunteer Army, were retreating—which seemed incredible. The Tchernobylsky Hussars, hastily recruited with raw men who lacked all military training, were covering the retreat.

It had been raining heavily for several days, and the steady, grey downfall blended with the dense clouds that hung low over the earth, furrowed from time to time by short, vivid flashes. A thin white smoke rose in the leaden vault of the sky, and the sound of a bursting shell reached the ear almost at the same time as the report of the gun. As far as the eye could see, was the black earth, the short brown foliage of the late beet crops and rusty stubble fields. A chain of sloping hillocks rose on the horizon, so low and black that it seemed as though they would turn into liquid mud and mix with the plain. A white church spire rose in the distance. The whitewashed houses of the village were hardly perceptible in the mist.

"Hisss . . . sss . . . came the sound of four shells flying over the heads of the hussars. One of the shells fell about twenty steps from Brovtzin, covering him from head to foot with mud, but none of the four projectiles burst. Not a muscle of the captain's face

quivered. His horse, held by him as in a vise, did not move.

"Lieutenant Kusskoff!" cried Brovtzin, lowering his field glass.

Igrunka galloped up to him.

"Ride up to the battery and tell them to withdraw to Vorojba. We shall follow. There is no sense in remaining here. We shall never be able to stop them."

They rode in a straight line over the fields, in the direction of the church spire, trampling down the young winter corn.

At Vorojba, a large village two hours by rail from Kieff, they occupied the building of the former post office, which had just been evacuated by the intelligence service of the Volunteer Army. Brovtzin entered a room where a table was littered with letters and documents. He opened a drawer, which also was full of letters.

"Atarshtchikoff!" he cried to his orderly, who was helping Sofia Nikolaévna make tea in the next room. "Light the stove and burn all this literature. Wait a moment . . . what is this?"

He had laid his hand on a pile of Bolshevist pamphlets and proclamations.

"The prisoners, probably, . . ." began Atarshtchikoff, but Brovtzin interrupted him, frowning.

"Ah, yes! That reminds me. . . . Listen, Igrunka:

this morning, at dawn, our horse-patrols captured two officers of the Red Army. They ought to be questioned, and, . . . you understand, . . . I cannot trust myself to do it. It is evident that their army has been reorganised. Go and question them in my place, and note down their answers. Try and learn who they are and obtain some details of their forces. Whom are we fighting, and who is at the head of the divisions that are marching against us? You understand, Igrunka, we are no longer dealing with that brigand, Makhno and such rabble, but with the Imperial Academy of the General Staff and the Infantry School of Emperor Paul. Have you observed their ranks? They advance in order. I should say they were Germans, if the Germans had not gone under and had not replaced their Emperor with a German Kerensky. Go, be quick."

"Where are the prisoners, Sir?"

"You have only to cross the courtyard and turn to the left. You will see a sentinel at the door of a hata. They are there."

Igrunka saluted, took a pad out of his knapsack and hastened to fulfil his orders.

In the empty hata, with an earthen floor, a man of about forty was sitting on a bench placed against the wall, his elbows resting on the table in front of him. His hair, which was cut short, was turning grey; he was clean-shaven, had clear-cut features and large brown eyes. He wore a grey shirt, with red cotton stripes sewn on the collar, and red stars embroidered

on the sleeves. He lifted sorrowful eyes when Igrunka entered, and fixed them upon the young man.

The other officer, who was much younger than his companion, was dressed in a shirt of the same description, grey trousers, boots and leggings. He had pale round eyes and a sallow face, like one who is underfed or has just come out of a hospital. He was walking up and down the room, and when the door opened glanced round nervously at Igrunka.

Kusskoff saluted; the young officer bowed very low. His companion did not move.

Igrunka called the guard and gave the order to take the young officer to the guard-room. He drew a bench up to the table and sat down opposite to the elder Red officer. He felt awkward and ill at ease.

"I have been ordered to question you," he said, blushing.

"Pray proceed," answered the officer in a low voice, glancing dully at Igrunka.

"Your name and surname? Your rank?"

"Nicholas Massiaguin, captain of the Imperial Army, promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel by the Provisional Government. I am a pupil of the Alexander Military School. I received my commission in 1907," answered the officer, speaking in a low, even voice.

"Were you an officer in the regular army?"

"Yes . . . in the N. Regiment of Krassnoslobodsk. I was a company commander during the war. I was wounded twice. I have the Cross of St. George."

"And you took up service with these scoundrels?"

"Excuse me," said the officer in a scarcely audible voice. "I consider that this has nothing to do with your cross-examination. Besides, if I were to tell you everything, you wouldn't understand."

Igrunka blushed. The pencil shook in his hand. "All right!" he said gloomily. "It is certainly very difficult for me to understand you. I could never understand. But you are right. This has nothing to do with my cross-examination. What are you at present and where do you serve?"

"I command the First Battalion of the N. Regiment, of the Fusiliers' Division, in the Army of the Soviets."

"Who is in command of the regiment?"

"Comrade Bashmatchassoff, a communist."

"And who is Division Commander?"

"Comrade Kusskoff."

The pencil broke in Igrunka's hand. His face had become purple. He bent his head and began to sharpen the pencil.

"Excuse me," he said. "Did I hear right?"

He had heard the name and knew quite well who was at the head of the division that operated against them; but he had the vague hope of having made a mistake.

"Comrade Kusskoff, general of the Imperial Army, my former chief. He was in command of a regiment at the German front during the war, and later on in the Caucasus. He had been appointed brigade com-

mander before the revolution. I had not heard of him since."

"That will do," said Igrunka, angrily. "Do you know his name and his patronymic? There are many Kusskoffs."

"But none like him. His name is Fedor Michailovitch. There is not a single officer of the former Russian army who does not know Fedor Michailovitch Kusskoff."

"Where are his headquarters?" asked Igrunka, who could hardly recognize his own voice.

"Yesterday they were at Korytino, but they must have moved to-day to Ovrajnoe."

"Twenty versts from here?"

"Yes, about that, I think."

Igrunka went on questioning. The captain answered. Igrunka put down his answers in his notebook: the division consisted of three brigades, each three regiments strong, but the third brigade was not yet complete. A divison of light artillery was attached to each brigade; two divisions of heavy artillery were also supposed to be attached to the division at the head of which stood Fedor Michailovitch Kusskoff, but they only existed on paper. There were two big guns, but they had to be left behind at Sévsk, because it had been impossible to move them out of the mud. Two squadrons of cavalry and two squadrons of airplanes completed the division, but the machines were in bad condition, and there were no pilots.

All this would have interested Igrunka enormously at another time, and in different circumstances. The captain begged him to take special note that he and his companion, Khoudjin, had not been taken prisoners, but had voluntarily crossed the line of hussar sentinels, because they did not wish to serve the Government of the Soviets.

Igrunka wrote all this down, like an automaton, scarcely understanding what he wrote. His temples were throbbing. His father was in the Army of the Soviets, twenty versts away from him. And where was his mother? Why was his father with "them"? It was his father who had given the order to fire; it was by his orders that these four shells had been fired, which had covered Captain Brovtzin and himself with mud, and which might have killed them if they had burst. It was but yesterday that the hussars had been dreaming of victory, planning to break through the Red front, take the whole staff prisoner and hang the chief of the division.

The pencil was constantly breaking in his hand. He sharpened it and it broke again.

"Will you take my pencil? It is a chemical one, it does not easily break," said the captain.

"He doesn't suspect anything. He doesn't know what hell I am going through. Yesterday, I was planning to hang the chief of the division, to hang my own father! Mother, mother, how could all this happen?"

He longed to run away and escape into the wet and

muddy steppe, to fly from the incomprehensible, unnamable torture of life. But was it possible to escape from it? He, Igrunka Kusskoff, was fighting against his father, general of a division in the Army of the Soviets. He could die—he could shoot himself. But what would be the good of it? Tomorrow, the "Kornilovtzy," the "Drozdovtzy" and the "Samourtzy," having rested and filled their ranks, would undertake a new offensive; tomorrow, the earth would dry and the tanks would move on; tomorrow, Brovtzin would shoot his father—his dear, kind father. What horrible world was he living in? What was life? And where was God?

"The infantry regiments, the deficiency of which was as much as 71% last year, are at present almost entirely complete," said the captain.

The pencil broke once more.

"Excuse me . . . what did you say? They are complete?"

"Yes, almost entirely."

"Ah! . . . this is very interesting."

"I am telling you all this in order that you may know that the organization of the army, and its discipline, are far superior to what they were last year. Sytin has been removed from Tzaritzin, Stalin has been transferred to the Revolutionary Council. Voroshiloff and Minin have been obliged to resign, and all the higher posts of command are occupied by officers of the former Imperial General Staff."

"Yes, certainly. You will report all this at head-

quarters. I have only been charged to. . . . Excuse me, what did you say was the name of the division commander?"

"Kusskoff, Fedor Michailovitch Kusskoff," said the captain with emphasis, and seeing that Igrunka had risen from his seat, he followed his example.

"Shall I sign my deposition?" he asked.

"Yes, please do . . . but no, wait, . . . it is not necessary; this is only a preliminary cross-examination," replied Igrunka, collecting the scattered leaflets, on which he could hardly decipher his own handwriting.

He walked to the door, leaving his cap on the table.

"Lieutenant," said the captain, gently," you have forgotten your cap.

"Ah, yes, thank you."

He pulled his cap down to his eyebrows and left the hata. It was raining hard. His back and his shoulders were drenched, but he stood in the courtyard, under the rain, without moving, lost in thought.

"I must do something. . . . I cannot fight against my father!" But he felt that there was no possible way out of the situation.

The window of the post office opened and a gentle voice called out to him.

"Igrunka, what are you doing there? What has happened? Come in and have some tea."

Sister Serebrennikova was at the window. Igrunka ran up to it.

"Sofia Nikolaévna, are you alone? I should like to talk to you."

"Come in; I am alone. I have just given Brovtzin his tea, and I have warmed up yours."

## XVIII.

The grey twilight crept into the miserable little room of the post-master at Vorojba through the curtainless window and fell on the broken bedstead. The rain had ceased. The courtyard was full of white mist. A thick, warm vapor rose from the steppe, heavy with the smell of damp earth, manure and burnt straw.

Sister Serebrennikova had made her room as neat and as comfortable as possible. She had laid a colored cloth on the table. The samovar was still boiling. A loaf of bread lay on a plate, a pot of English marmalade stood beside it. Sofia Nikolaévna had just risen from her seat to light the lamp.

"Wait a moment," she said, "I want to hang up the curtain."

She drew a piece of blue stuff out of a worn old valise and climbed lightly upon a chair in order to hang it on the nails that stuck in the wall above the window.

"That will do," she said.

Igrunka sat quite still. He had just made a clean breast of everything. He had spoken to the sister as he would have spoken to his mother. She listened to him in silence, and he saw that she did not quite know what to say to him, that she was temporising

before giving him an answer. She was measuring with her eyes the distance for hanging up the curtain. She bent down without any apparent effort over the table and stretched out her hand to reach the stuff. When she had finished her work, she got down softly from the chair.

"No, she is not perplexed, she knows what she has to say, but has not yet found the right words," thought Igrunka.

Sofia Nikolaévna went up to a large wooden box, upon which stood a lamp. She had already made a shade for it out of the pink sheets of paper, with the text of the "International" printed in gold letters on it, which Brovtzin had found in the next room. She lit the lamp and placed the shade upon it. A pink light fell upon her face, her white cap and apron. She sat down upon the box, placed her soft plump hand on the hand of the young man and said in a gentle voice:

"Poor boy!"

Igrunka could see quite close to him her round tanned face, the dimples on her cheeks, her pink lips, her straight, delicately chiselled nose and great brown eyes, under their dark eyelashes. She appeared to him an angel among all these dark, gloomy, blood-thirsty people.

"Poor Igrunka," she said, "you are indeed to be pitied. We are all of us to be pitied. God has forsaken us. Think of all those who suffer there, where your father, with a heavy heart, leads his troops to

fight for an unjust cause. And how many suffer here! O Lord! . . . forgive us our sins! No; nothing could justify your fighting against your father!"

"What am I to do?" murmured Igrunka. He was feeling calmer already, eager to accept any suggestion coming from Sofia Nikolaévna.

"You do not believe that your father is sincerely with them?"

"Most certainly not. Father and mother gave Svietik, Oleg and myself their blessing to fight the Bolsheviks and deliver Russia from their yoke."

"Listen, Igrunka, it is not for me, a mere woman, to decide such questions. Let us appeal to Constantin Petrovitch, shall we? Let us ask him to judge and decide."

"Brovtzin? I am afraid to tell him everything. He hates the Bolsheviks, . . . how am I to tell him that my father is with them?"

"You don't know Captain Brovtzin, Igrunka. There is no one like him. He is like one of those aurochs of the Bieloveje Forest, which are now extinct, like a white crow. He is the personification of all the pure and noble feelings that ought to be basic with every officer. He knows and cares for nothing—but the truth."

"I shall never be able to speak to him as I spoke to you, to tell him everything. I should have to speak of the poverty with which we have had to struggle all our lives, of Aunt Lipotchka, of Uncle Hippolytus, Aunt Azalea and Tom. He would not listen to me.

All this wouldn't interest him! And I will never be able to find the right words!"

"I shall speak for you and tell him everything," said Sofia Nikolaévna. "Sit over there on my bed and interrupt me if I say anything wrong. Believe me, Igrunka, whatever Brovtzin decides will be right."

Sister Serebrennikova left the room and returned in a few moments accompanied by Brovtzin.

"Well, what's wrong now?" he said, sitting down by the samovar. "Now that you have interrupted my sleep, Sofia Nikolaévna, give me at least a cup of tea."

"In a moment, dear captain. We shall put some fresh coals into the samovar, Atarshtchikoff and I, and I'll let you have some biscuits."

"Ah, that will be nice. Now speak, you saintly woman, and tell me what new trick fate has played and upon whom?"

## XIX.

The light of early dawn was looking through the window. The samovar and the lamp had gone out long ago. Sofia Nikolaévna had spoken all night, Igrunka had interrupted her now and then, taking up the thread of the story, carried away by his recollections.

Everything had been said, everything was clear. Igrunka's father, General Kusskoff, was now at Ovrajnoe, twenty versts away from Vorojba, at the head of a Red division.

Brovtzin had not interrupted once. He had listened to their narrative, confused and entangled as it was, but vivid and heart-rending, without once looking at his lieutenant.

"Is that all?" he asked, when Sofia Nikolaévna had finished.

"Yes, that is all," she said.

"It is a serious matter!" said Brovtzin, tugging at his thick curly hair, sprinkled with grey. "I know your father, Igrunka! He is a true soldier! Had he lived in the time of the Empress Catherine II he would have been a second Suvoroff. He is as brave as a lion, as docile as a sheep and as strong as an ox. I see now why the Kornilovtzy and the Markovtzy were obliged to retreat. If he undertakes a task, he will

carry it through to the end. Eh, Igrunka!" he said, his face contracting with pain, "I am loath to let you go, but . . . you cannot fight against your father."

He rose from his seat, walked across the room and opened the door, calling to his orderly:

"Atarshtchikoff!" he called, "go and find the adjutant of the regiment. Ask him to come here and bring all his forms and seals with him.

He slowly turned from the door:

"It is said in the Bible: 'Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long.' Is it not so, Sofia Nikolaévna?"

"Yes," she answered. She sat with folded arms in a corner of the room, without moving. Igrunka stood upright beside the bed, his eyes fixed upon Brovtzin.

"Listen, Igrunka," said the captain. "I am at present in command of the Hussars. You have sworn fidelity to the regiment. I free you from your oath. Go away . . . flee from evil; go away today—immediately, before we meet the Reds in the field. I shall send you to the Caucasus, to Tuapse, to buy horses for the regiment. Later on, . . . we shall see. My heart warns me that difficult times are in store for us. If anything happens, . . . you understand, . . . I forgive you beforehand. I give you leave to go where you will—Abyssinia, Brazil, the Argentine, Australia, Canada. You are young . . . try to study . . . with profit, learn to be strong. The world belongs at present to those who are strong, intelligent and steadfast. You will come back when you can.

Good-bye, my friend, I cannot lead you to fight against your father."

Brovtzin held out his hand to Igrunka and Sofia Nikolaévna saw a tear rolling down his brown, scarred cheek. She, also, was crying silently, holding her handkerchief to her eyes.

A pale sky stretched above the wide streak of thick white mist which enveloped the steppe and the village. The sun had not risen yet, but its rays were ready to break forth. Lights were gleaming in the white mist along the railway line and the red cattle trucks and luggage vans seemed to be swimming along the line in a sea of milk. Igrunka, accompanied by an orderly, rode in the direction of the railway station. He was leaving the front, the regiment, which was so dear to him.

His heart was heavy and yet limitless distance attracted him irresistibly and life seemed as vast, as mysterious, as the Russian steppe, which was waking under the early rays of the sun.

As he was nearing the station the familiar sound of a bursting shell reached his ear, and a little puff of white smoke rose above the green roof of the church. . The Bolsheviks had begun to shell Vorojba.

"You are leaving us, Your Honor?" said the orderly, handing him the small portmanteau which contained all Igrunka's belongings.

"Yes, I am sent to buy horses in the Caucasus," replied the young man with a sigh.

"We do lack horses," said the soldier again. "We bear the name of Hussars, but have no horses to ride."

"God keep you safe," said Igrunka, holding out his hand to the soldier.

"And you, too, Your Honor."

A second shell burst above the white houses of the village, and a yellow flame leaped up in the mist. A thatched roof had been set on fire.

"It is my father—my own father—who is shelling Vorojba. Does he know that his favorite, Igrunka, is here? Where is my mother?" thought Igrunka, as he entered the station.

A crowd of people elbowed one another—bags, bundles and boxes were all about. "Is the train going to start, or not? . . . Is the line clear? . . . There is no engine. . . . There is one. . . . The engine-driver refuses to start. . . . He has consented for a bottle of vodka and a pound of sausages,": so the scattered talk ran.

About ten in the morning, as the first ranks of the Bolshevist infantry were appearing on the horizon, and the dark column of the Hussars who were covering the battery had just left Vorojba, the train started, with a clanking of chains and rusty iron, and rolled onwards to the South. Igrunka felt that he was leaving, not only the front and his regiment, but his country, and he knew that there would be no return to the things he had loved and treasured above all else in the world.

## XX.

At about the same time, the Red division under the command of Comrade Kusskoff received orders to start for Petrograd.

The commissar of the division, an ex-teacher in an elementary school, and a convinced communist, as long and thin as a may-pole, walked about, anxious and irritated. The attacks of the Reds on Tzaritzin had been unsuccessful. Denikin was marching triumphantly on Orel. Moscow was in danger, and it was only at Vorojba that the resistance of the Volunteer Army had been broken. The high command of the Red Army was withdrawing the best division, that of Comrade Kusskoff, from the most important section at the moment of this victory and despatching it to Petrograd. As a matter of fact, ever since the summer, Comrade Zinovieff had been sending panicky radiograms: "The Red Capital is in danger!" "The bulwark of communism, Petrograd, is threatened by the bands of Rodzianko, Czarist general and former landowner!" But the commissar, Blagoveshtchensky, knew the value of Zinovieff's reports.

Hordes of Red soldiers were crowding into the carriages, elbowing each other, shouting and yelling. From a distance they might have been mistaken for

old soldiers of the time of the great war. But seen at a closer range their dirty caps, pushed backward and decorated with big red stars, their long unkempt hair and unwashed faces, the way in which they swore at each other . . . clearly showed that a considerable change had taken place in the army. It had been reorganized but the organization was profoundly defective.

Fedor Michailovitch might have done something towards smartening up their appearance, but there were practically no funds available. There were no clippers to cut the soldiers' hair; soap was unobtainable. The Red troops had to content themselves with what they could requisition or plunder from the population. They had been operating since the summer in regions where the detachments of Mamontoff and Mironoff, of Oulaguai and Dumenko had been moving to and fro for over a year, and there was nothing left to requisition or plunder. The towns and villages were half ruined, houses were roofless, windows broken, doors removed. Civil war had devastated this part of Russia, and the peaceful population had to pay equally for the failures of the Red and the White armies. The Reds wreaked their vengeance on the people of the towns, persecuting, shooting and plundering what remained of the unfortunate "bourjouis." The Whites extracted what they could from the villagers, exercising pressure on the peasants, forcing them to help in the resistance against the Bolsheviks.

Two special railway carriages had been attached to

the military train for the use of Fedor Michailovitch, his staff and the commissar of the division. One of them was a second-class carriage painted yellow; it had belonged to the Nicolas Railway and was still decorated with the Imperial Eagle and the monogram of the Emperor Nicolas I. The other one, a third-class carriage, was brand new, painted green and decorated with the symbolical hammer and sickle, with the letters: R. S. F. S. R.* traced in white above them.

"I have inspected the second-class carriage, comrade," said the commissar. "The seats are padded, but they are full of vermin. I suggest that we should occupy the third-class carriage,—it is very clean."

"Do as you like," said Fedor Michailovitch wearily.

He had not changed much in the course of the year and a half spent in the service of the Red Army. He was just as thin, although Blagoveshtchensky, who was fond of good food and wine, insisted on his sharing them with him. All these delicacies—veal, ducks, geese, sucking pigs, which the commissar heartily enjoyed, disgusted him. He knew only too well how they had been obtained. But he could do nothing to stop it.

A decision was slowly ripening in his mind, which he would have put into practice long ago, had it not been for the fear of sacrificing Natasha.

Natasha lived in Petrograd. Fedor Michailovitch was able to send her provisions and money and he knew that she secretly helped many less fortunate ones. She

* Rossyiskaia Sotzialisticheskaia Federativnaia Sovietskaia Respublika. (Socialistic Federative Russian Republic of the Soviets.)

occupied two rooms in a requisitioned apartment, but five young communists, who had been ordered to watch her unrelentingly, lived in the same flat. They were polite to her, as long as the commissar Blagoveshtchensky reported favorably of her husband's behavior.

Fedor Michailovitch was walking up and down the platform of the station. A warm breeze coming from the burnt out steppe brought a smell of carrion. The whole steppe between Tamboff, the Black and the Caspian seas was strewn with carcasses of dead horses. The horse of the Don, the pride of Russia, had been exterminated by the civil war.

Blagoveshtchensky followed Fedor Michailovitch about like a shadow, and it seemed to the latter that the commissar was trying to read his thoughts in the nape of his neck, in order to make his report to the Communist Party Committee.

"You are not yet fifty, comrade," said Blagoveshtchensky, "you are not much older than I am, and your hair is turning quite grey. You think too much, . . . what do you think about?"

"We have no soap, comrade, and my men are covered with lice. All this troubles me."

"It is well, comrade, that you care for your soldiers, . . . yes . . . I know that you are full of solicitude for them. But, . . . I don't quite understand you. What kind of man are you? What have you on your mind?"

Fedor Michailovitch shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"Oh, to be free from this sordid being, this vermin, this parasite who dogs my footsteps from morning to night!" he thought with disgust.

He longed for the night, when everybody would be asleep; he wanted to think, . . . to the measured sound of the turning wheels singing their monotonous song.

He must do something, . . . anything, . . . it was impossible to go on like this much longer.

But the trouble was that he was incapable of doing the "something" or "anything"—"anyhow."

He was as straight as a bow string, as strong as an oak, as firm as steel.

Dry rot was knawing the oak at the core; rust was eating into the steel and the string was slackening.

## XXI.

LIFE in Petrograd was restless and full of alarms. Fedor Michailovitch found the town greatly changed since it had been under the Provisional Government. People in the street looked shabby. A few smart sailors with costly jewels hung round their powdered necks, and trousers as wide as a woman's skirt, were still to be seen on the Nevsky, the Morskaia and on the quay. Pupils of Trotzky's Military School, in scarlet tunics and queer-looking helmets, strolled here and there, but their fat faces had lost their impudent expression and looked worried and malicious. Fedor Michailovitch was struck by the air of ruin and decay in the streets of the capital. On the Nevsky, the wooden pavement had been taken up as though for repair, but no one seemed to think of repairing it, and the wooden blocks were gradually being stolen for fuel. Here a wooden fence had been pulled down, there a burnt and pillaged house, with broken windows, would meet the eye. At the corner of the Liteinaia, Fedor Michailovitch saw an old, white-haired priest in a cassock, begging for alms, and a woman, unmistakably a lady, selling patties. There was a curious absence of people in their prime, only old men, thin and shabbily dressed, or else young boys and girls walking about

the streets. The young people moved about in mixed and noisy crowds and seemed very gay. They sang topical ditties, not always complimentary to the communists.

As he was elbowing his way through a crowd of porters carrying sacks of flour on their backs, close to the Nicholas Railway Station, where still towered the bronze statue of the Emperor Alexander III, an old woman began to swear at Fedor Michailovitch: "You fat swine," said she, "look at his shining overfed face. Little do you care for the poor!"

"Shall I arrest the old hag, comrade?" asked Blagoveshtchensky, who was following him as usual.

"Leave her alone! Do I look fat and overfed?" wistfully replied Fedor Michailovitch.

Blagoveshtchensky could not help smiling; the emaciated face of an ascetic monk was looking at him from under the crumpled cap with the red star.

In the Zabalkansky Prospect, men and women, evidently of the better class, in rags, were digging trenches. A young sapper officer and two sergeants were directing the work. The blocks of the pavement were being turned over and the red sand mixed with the black earth lay in soft mounds beside them. Water was rising to the surface. Clumsy, inexperienced hands were putting up barbed wire barricades. Fedor Michailovitch expressed his opinion of the uselessness of these lines of defence to the old Chief of the Defence of Petrograd, an officer of the former General Staff.

"All this was very well in 1798, 1848 and 1871, comrade," he said, "but at present it is entirely useless. Yudenitch's White Army has several tanks, and what is this parody of trenches against a tank!"

"I know it," murmured the old man, "they have all lost their heads. These trenches are not meant to arrest the movements of the enemy, but to reassure the members of the Petrograd Commune. A real panic has got hold of them. Zinovieff was on the point of taking to his heels. They have issued an order to form two divisions of workmen and hastily arm them. I am waiting for Trotzky's arrival. He may be able to calm the crowd."

"What has happened to frighten them so?"

"Yamburg has been taken by assault. The comrades beat it with such precipitation that they were in Gatchina by sunset. The inhabitants of Petrograd are overjoyed. We dare not show ourselves anywhere.

"Presently we shall be hung, Fedor Michailovitch. They will never forgive us for having taken up service with the Reds."

"They ought to understand. . . ."

"It is impossible for them to understand us. Why are we in their service?"

This mood, this dread of all responsibility seemed to prevail everywhere. It seemed as though, with the approach of the White Army, all these people who had been hypnotised by the Reds, had suddenly come to their senses and were asking themselves: "Whom do we serve, and why?"

## XXII.

Fedor Michailovitch longed to see Natasha, although he dreaded to find her as silent as before. But he put off his meeting with her until the last moment, like a child who leaves a favorite sweet "pour la bonne bouche." Towards evening, after having gone the rounds of his regiments and seen some of his friends, he drove to the street where his wife lived.

The apartment, which had been requisitioned for Natasha, consisted of five rooms and a kitchen. Three of them, looking on to the street, were occupied by the communists. Two smaller ones, with an outlook on the courtyard, had been assigned to the wife of the "Natch-Div. (Red Russian for Division Commander). Fedor Michailovitch and Blagoveshtchensky now occupied one of these rooms.

Natasha did not come out to meet her husband, but he saw her for a moment standing on the threshold of her room. She seemed to him taller, thinner, and more beautiful than ever.

He wanted to call out to her, but lacked the courage. As she was closing the door, however, he noticed the expression of her grey eyes, and saw that they were full of love.

His decision was taken at once. All the thoughts

that had been disturbing him of late suddenly appeared to be simple and clear, as if someone had set them in order, like books on the shelves of a library.

He must tell her everything. Nothing must be left obscure. With the help of God, she might yet be saved. He must explain to her why he had taken up service with the Red Army and tell her all that he had thought and done in these eighteen months. He must go up to her and say: "In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; Amen!" . . . and then begin his tale.

He asked himself if he was capable of saying it with real faith. And the answer was: "yes."

He felt the bow-string tightening, his decision becoming as firm as an oak and as hard as steel.

He waited for the night. He had his tea with the commissar. One of the communists brought it to them from the kitchen, saying respectfully:

"Your wife is having her tea in her room, comrade. She probably is not quite well."

When everybody had gone to bed, Fedor Michailovitch pretended to do the same and watched. Three of the communists had gone out, the two others were asleep in their room. Blagovshtchensky, tired out by his day in town, slept soundly in his comfortable bed.

Fedor Michailovitch got up, made a dummy out of his tunic and greatcoat and drew his blanket over it, as he and his schoolfellows used to do when they were in the Cadet Corps and wanted to deceive the authorities. He dressed hastily and crept up on tiptoe to

Natasha's door. It was locked. Natasha was not asleep. He heard the sound of her bare feet pattering softly about the room.

"Who is there?" she asked, as it seemed to him, in a displeased, unfamiliar and severe voice.

"In the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Natasha, let me in."

The key turned in the lock and the door softly opened.

The room was half-dark. The narrow bed, a white girlish bed, had not been turned down. A candle was burning on the little table lighting up a great ikon of the Holy Virgin. Two open books lay on the chair beside the table. Fedor Michailovitch recognised them at once. They were a prayer book and a Bible which had belonged to his mother. Lipotchka had given them to Natasha, saying:

"Take them, Natasha. You believe in God, you will read them. As for me. . . ."

She was standing in front of him, in her long white nightgown, a wonderful light on her face. Her hair fell in thick silvery waves below her waist. Her big eyes were shining. She reminded him of those Christian martyrs he had seen in pictures. He remembered them well: the stone walls of a Roman circus, the vast arena, lions, tigers, barred cages and women in white, with large, luminous eyes.

A cross hung on a golden chain from her neck. She had the habit of kissing it when she said her prayers. This cross had belonged to Fedor Michailo-

vitch. They had exchanged their baptismal crosses after the marriage ceremony.

He looked at her and felt that he could and must tell her everything. He wanted to kneel down at her feet, but she stopped him and motioned him to a chair while she sat on the bed.

"You must try and understand, and forgive, Natasha," said Fedor Michailovitch.

"I can neither understand, nor forgive you," she whispered with lowered eyes after a few moments silence.

He began to tell her all he had suffered, all he had gone through, since he had joined the Red Army and of the futility of his efforts. She listened to him attentively, murmuring from time to time: "I know, I know everything. . . ."

When he had finished, she said softly:

"Why, then, did you join them?"

"Natasha, if I hadn't, you would have been arrested and taken away to the Extraordinary Commission, . . . you would have been tortured to death."

He told her everything. He reminded her of the day when she had cried out to him, as he was going down the stairs: "We shall live and be happy yet, Fedia!" He confessed that he had been so upset by her words that he had there and then decided to save her by joining the Red Army.

Natasha listened to him with shining eyes. Her soul was reflected in them.

"Isn't it strange," she said, "you wanted to save my body—at the price of my soul!"

She laughed! She put her arm round his neck, as she used to and said: "Don't think of me anymore. Leave the Red Army . . . go away . . . save and redeem your soul."

It was decided that when he returned to the front, he would pass over to the White Army, that he would not serve the devil any longer.

"And you, Natasha?"

"I have prayed for you, and God has heard my prayers. Pray for me . . . God is merciful," she said.

She pressed him to her heart and kissed him. Her kiss was full of love and tenderness.

He left her at seven in the morning. She kissed him once more as she saw him to the door. They were both smiling.

He laughed as he undid the dummy on his bed. He felt as young as when he played tricks at school.

For the first time for many months, words of prayer came to his lips, he lay down, murmuring them, and fell asleep smiling.

## XXIII.

Familiar surroundings! Fedor Michailovitch had many a time walked or ridden along these straight roads running off into the distance between the fields, when he was a pupil of the Cavalry School, and later on, as an officer of the Military Academy of the General Staff during the autumn manoeuvres. In front of him was the road leading to Ligovo; to the right, it ran uphill, in the direction of Pulkovo and Gatchina; to the left lay the road to Tzarskoie Selo. He recognised the big inn, with its red sign-board, bearing an inscription in green and gold letters, the paved courtyard, the pickets, the mangers full of hay, the familiar smell of horses and manure. An old birch tree, arrayed in its autumn gold foliage and a slender mountain ash, the palm of the North, projected their delicate shadows over the courtyard.

The peasants all seemed well-to-do, their houses were substantially built, surrounded with wooden fences painted grey or ochre and hedged with yellow acacias, white hazel and hawthorn bushes. A long avenue of shady birch trees stretched far into the distance. Bridges spanned deep ditches, along the muddy high-road further up. He could see the villa Kuptzoff, where the Emperor Nicholas II and the

Empress Alexandra Fedorovna had once had tea and from the terrace of which they had watched the military manoeuvres. A marble slab commemorating the event had been placed on the wall in the drawing-room.

The air was chilly and Fedor Michailovitch entered for a moment one of the peasants' houses, in order to warm himself. The master of the izba, a man of gigantic stature, glanced with distrust at his greatcoat, embroidered with red stars. There was a smell of lamp oil in the big, low-ceilinged room. A dark ikon representing the image of Christ, in a large gilt frame, adorned with two paper roses, hung in one corner. A green church-lamp burnt in front of it. The walls, papered with blue paper, cracked here and there, were decorated with faded photographs of the Emperor Alexander II and of some soldiers of the Preobrajensky Regiment, in their red-faced uniforms. The portraits of the late Emperor and Empress hung above the windows. The Bolsheviks had wandered to and fro for two years in these regions, but they had not been able to destroy these portraits, neither had they been able to blot out from the hearts of the peasants the image of those two, whom they had occasionally seen during manoeuvres.

"Are you a soldier?" asked Fedor Michailovitch.

"I have served in the army," replied the peasant sternly. "I am an ex-private of the Preobrajensky Regiment, of the time of His Majesty, the Emperor Alexander II."

The old man stood up with a martial air, the small

wrinkles that covered his face had disappeared, he glanced significantly at Fedor Michailovitch and said:

"I had the honor to serve at St. Stefano, against the Turks, Your Excellency! I have mounted guard at the Stavka of the Commander in Chief. Our coats were torn, but our hearts were full of hope. Those were great times for soldiers!"

The report of a big gun came from somewhere in the distance beyond Tzarskoie. The window-panes shook. The peasant crossed himself and said:

"God help us!"

Coming out of the cottage, Fedor Michailovitch glanced at the blue sky, with its fleecy clouds, at the beauty of this fresh October day, the scarlet clusters of the mountain ash, upon which the melting hoar-frost glittered like so many diamonds, the wet roofs, the vast meadows, darkened and swamped by the rain, the cupolas of St. Isaac and of the Novodevitchy Convent scintillating in the distance. Full of hope, he repeated the words of the old peasant:

"God help us!"

The whole of the road to Pulkovo swarmed with people; the workmen, mobilized by Trotzky for the defence of "Red Petrograd" were moving along it. Pale and awkward, narrow-shouldered, with sallow, haggard faces, dressed in tunics, overcoats, long trousers and laced shoes, carrying awkwardly attached cartridge boxes and haversacks on their backs, Austrian rifles tied anyhow to their shoulders with string, they crowded near the houses of the suburbs of Pul-

kovo. Cigarette smoke curled above their grey peaked caps and soft felt hats. These men did not look like soldiers. There was none of the strong healthy smell of Russian infantry, a mixture of leather, boot-grease, cheap tobacco and humanity, a smell so familiar to Fedor Michailovitch that he had grown to like it. They smelt of something rank and stale.

Pupils of the Red Officers' School were in command of this crowd. The commissar with a red armlet on the sleeve of his greenish British tunic, (which was too big for him and made him look like a scarecrow), rode a grey peasant's pony, sticking out his elbows and pulling at the bridle.

"Comrades," he cried, "you must defend the revolutionary honor of the labor proletariat. The Red capital must not fall into the hands of the White rabble. Down with the capitalists!"

"Son of a dog!" said someone at Fedor Michailovitch's side. "We have had enough of these high-flown phrases!"

Timid voices were heard issuing a command: "Shoulder arms, comrades, form in sections!"

The vanguard moved in a disorderly mass in the direction of Tzarskoie.

Between the houses one could see fields and the railway embankment, along which slowly moved a grey train. A flame escaped from the first carriage with a loud report, echoing in the distance, and a projectile whizzed in the air. Another gun answered.

## XXIV.

TEREKHOFF, an ex-private of the Imperial Army, stood waiting for his chief. He had voluntarily joined the Red Army; he had to earn his bread one way or another, and the profession of a soldier appealed to him. He was dressed in a well-fitting, brand new overcoat, and carried a heavy haversack on his back.

Fedor Michailovitch glanced at this sack and smiled. The sack contained his own old black overcoat with a sheepskin collar, and his old fur-trimmed cap. Natasha had given them into the soldier's keeping.

"Is it time?" was the mute inquiry in Terekhoff's eyes.

"It must be," thought Fedor Michailovitch glancing up at the sky. The sun was almost at its zenith, the air was growing warm. "It must be about noon."

Fedor Michailovitch listened attentively. Gun and rifle fire were heard. The White troops were probably firing from Perelessino on Tzarskoie.

A young commissar, Abrasha Goldschmidt, galloped up. He was one of the pupils of the Red Officers' School, sent from Moscow to direct the movements of the artillery.

"What has happened?" asked Fedor Michailovitch.

"We must get away, comrade! Your men are re-

treating, they are evacuating Tzarskoie. What will become of us? This rabble of workmen are no soldiers! The pupils of Trotzky's Officers' School have attacked the tanks of the enemy, and they have all been massacred. What will Comrade Trotzky say? They have tanks, . . . tanks, . . . tanks, . . . and we have nothing, but . . . commissars!"

"Well," said Fedor Michailovitch, "we must be off."

"Where to?" inquired Blagoveshtchensky, awkwardly mounting his horse.

"To Tzarskoie."

"Why? What for?"

"We must stop the runners and make them fight."

"And must I go too?"

"You, . . . what for?"

"But I am the Commissar."

"Well, . . . that is your lookout."

Fedor Michailovitch mounted his shaggy little horse and trotted rapidly along the road.

On the slope of the hill, the bodies of the cadets of Trotzky's Military School lay on the yellow grass. They looked like wax dolls, with pale faces, in their red tunics and queer helmets. The buffoons' attire did not harmonize with the august calm of death.

At the gates of the park, the workmen, disorganized and scattered in groups, were calling to one another. The body of a young schoolboy of about twelve years old, in a grey overcoat with silver buttons, was stretched across the road.

Everything was quiet in the park. The roads with

their deep ruts, caused by the passage of big guns and lorries, were full of water with yellow leaves lying on top. One could see the green lawns through the bare bushes. A battery of two guns was unlimbered on one of these lawns. They rode past it, into the dreamy silence of the park. A few faded leaves clung to the bushes; black bunches of lilac, slender pine and red maple trees surrounded them on all sides.

Near the barracks of the hussars, Fedor Michailovitch met several men of his division, standing about in groups on the road. Words of command resounded. Officers were endeavoring to re-establish discipline. A few rifle-shots could be heard on the outskirts of Tzarskoie, but the fighting was evidently slowing down. A wounded soldier came up and said:

"Comrade, I am sent as a deputy. It seems that we shall not get the better of them."

"We will shake them off," said Fedor Michailovitch.

"We don't think we can do it."

The officer in command, an ex-officer of the Imperial Army, went up to Fedor Michailovitch.

"What are your orders, comrade?" he asked.

"You must retreat to Redko Kuzmino. If you meet any one else on your way, transmit to them my orders: the division must concentrate at Redko Kuzmino." answered Fedor Michailovitch.

His eyes were smiling. He felt himself under the protection of Natasha's prayers, of his mother's forgiveness and blessing.

Voices were heard in the rows of the Red soldiers.

"Well said, comrade! The general knows what he is about. What is the use of a counter-attack? We have nothing to gain by it, nothing to plunder, and it will always be time to go to Heaven!"

"Comrade-general," said the officer in a low voice, but emphasizing every word, "they have only one tank left, and that is out of use. And there are hardly any men, less than a regiment. We have nine armored trains. We can surround them in less than half an hour, and they will not be able to get out of it."

"May be, . . . but . . . can one be sure of success with such soldiers?"

"I can easily bring them back to reason."

"Try to steady them, when they have concentrated at Redko Kuzmino."

The company commander turned on his heel.

"March on, comrades," he ordered, muttering to himself: "If my guess about the division commander is right, this is an ugly business."

And seeing that Fedor Michailovitch was turning his horse in the direction of Gatchina, he cried out to him:

"Comrade, no one is there but the patrols!" Fedor Michailovitch pretended not to hear.

To the left stretched the Square of the Cathedral of St. Sofia. The pink low-built cathedral stood out amidst the variegated autumn foliage. A wide avenue of larch trees led to the houses. The swollen bodies of two dead horses were lying in the middle of the square and an abandoned cart with someone's luggage

was standing near by. Terekhoff, who had caught up with his chief, followed him on foot. Fedor Michailovitch pulled up his horse at the gate of a small, deserted villa, dismounted and put the bridle into the hands of Terekhoff. He opened the gate and entered the garden. Terekhoff tied the horse to a tree and cried out to him:

"Wait a moment till I see if the house is empty."

Fedor Michailovitch remained in the garden. Shells whizzed over the trees of the park. There was the snapping of a machine gun beyond Pavlovsky, but not a single human voice was to be heard.

"There is no one," said Terekhoff, coming out of the villa; everything is destroyed inside and horribly dirty."

Fedor Michailovitch entered the villa. Straw was scattered about on the balcony; a lamp was placed on a small, three-legged table, littered with papers and documents. A French window led into the drawing-room. The curtains were drawn and the room was in semi-darkness. There was an acrid smell, refuse covered the floor. The furniture was broken, the sofa was torn and there was a large stain of blood on it. Bandages and lint lay about the floor.

"It doesn't matter," said Fedor Michailovitch. "I'll change here." He took off his accoutrements; his overcoat and his bestarred uniform. Terekhoff pulled out of his bag the shirt, the overcoat and the cap that Natasha had given him.

Fedor Michailovitch changed his clothes. Tere-

khoff smeared the greatcoat and the uniform with blood.

"This will do capitally," he said, "I shall bring them these and tell them that you have been killed, and that I took them off your body!"

"Thank you, Terekhoff; I shall never forget what you've done for me. Try to get Natalia Nikolaievna to Gatchina as soon as possible."

"You can rely upon me," said the soldier, "it will soon be done."

"Thank you once more."

Fedor Michailovitch shook hands with Terekhoff. Through the window, he watched him untie the horse, mount and trot along the muddy avenue.

He waited for a moment and then stepped out on the balcony, leaning against the balustrade. The sun was very warm. He felt comfortable in his old overcoat and his fur-cap.

The dahlias, bitten by the frost, looked black and spongy. Black pods hung on the acacia bushes. A smell of resin came from the larch trees.

The guns were silent. Tzarskoie had been evacuated by the Reds but the White troops had not yet occupied it. Everything was calm and peaceful. Fedor Michailovitch was thinking of Natasha. As long as she was able to flee, . . . as long as she was safe. He came down the steps and walked slowly out of the garden. A lady and a gentleman wearing a short black overcoat and a soft felt hat were coming up the avenue.

Seeing Fedor Michailovitch, the lady waved her parasol and cried out to him, in a voice choked with tears:

"Listen! They have driven away the Bolsheviks! The Volunteers are entering Tzarskoie Selo. They are going to celebrate a Te Deum in the Cathedral."

And as though in answer to her words, the Cathedral bells began to ring, and their solemn and harmonious voices rose up to the blue sky.

The lady went up to Fedor Michailovitch.

"Christoss Voskresse!" she said, "Christ is risen. We are saved!"

## XXV.

At Redko Kuzmino, Terekhoff reported to the Division Chief of Staff the death of Fedor Michailovitch. He had brought with him the overcoat and the uniform soaked in blood, and related in detail the tragic end of the "comrade general," who had been killed by a bullet while rallying his men to a counter-attack. Terekhoff had seen him grow pale, sway in his saddle and fall from his horse, he had ridden up to him, had unbuttoned his greatcoat and his uniform . . . and had found him dead. The bullet had hit his heart. His shirt was all bloody. . . . The soldier, carried away by his tale, ended by believing it himself.

The Commissar, Blagoveshtchensky, touched the crumpled cloth with disgust and said:

"This is a serious affair. Make a parcel of these things and let us start at once for Petrograd. He leaves a widow behind. All this must be properly seen to."

Terekhoff got into the motor beside the communist-chauffeur. Blagoveshtchensky got in behind with an important air, as behooved a person in authority, and the car rolled along the dusty, uneven road in the direction of the capital.

Blagoveshtchensky informed Natasha that he had

bad news of her husband, and then went into the communists' rooms. They were all there, looking very preoccupied. The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Commune had invited all the communists to enlist in the army, so as to set an example of courage and energy to the soldiers and workmen. This measure did not in the least appeal to the little group who were mounting guard over the wife of the Chief of the Division.

Volodka Bezpaly, a member of the Communist Party, of true proletarian origin, was sitting at the tea-table, stroking his thick auburn hair. Moisha Rubintchik, the son of a tailor, a boy of about fifteen, very thin, with a long nose, large languid eyes and long dark eyelashes, sat opposite to Volodka, waiting for him to speak. He had joined the Party in order to escape service in the Red Army and had no desire to march in front of that army against the tanks. He had heard of the massacre of the young pupils of Trotzky's Military School.

Vasska Dolgopoloff, a pupil of the First Gymnasium, Aliosha Pestriakoff, the son of a sacristan, and Jenitchka, who seemed to have no surname at all, a drunkard of about thirty, felt calmer than the rest of the communists. They were true representatives of the proletariat and therefore above the common law. Besides, they were detectives of the Extraordinary Commission, and knew that no one would dare touch them.

The communists did not rise from their seats when

Blagoveshtchensky and Terekhoff came into the room, but they lifted their eyes and stared.

"Comrades," he said, "a dreadful thing has happened. At this tragical hour of struggle against universal capitalism, we have suffered a great loss: one of our most valorous chiefs, Comrade Kusskoff, has been hit by one of the enemy's bullets! He is dead! But we are alive and we shall avenge him!"

"Well, and what are you doing here?" Volodka asked, looking at Terekhoff.

"I have brought the overcoat and the uniform of the late comrade general," said the soldier, untying his parcel.

"The hero was hit by a bullet . . ." he repeated, handing the bloodstained uniform to the young man.

"Keep your remarks to yourself," said Jenitchka.

Volodka removed the glasses and bread-tray from the table and unfolded the uniform on it. Five shaggy, unkempt heads bent over it. As he examined it, an expression of satisfaction stole over Volodka's face. A cunning smile hovered on his lips. He leant back in his chair and slowly lighted a cigarette.

"You say that he was hit by a bullet?" he said, fixing his eyes on Terekhoff.

"Yes," answered the latter, "I saw him fall . . . the bullet had hit his heart."

"All right . . . comrades, please be witnesses that neither the overcoat nor the uniform have any hole in them."

Terekhoff heaved a deep sigh and took off his cap. Drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

Jenitchka suddenly left the room and returned almost immediately carrying five revolvers, which he laid on the table in front of each of the communists.

"Thank you, Jenitchka," said Volodka, "you are a clever man."

"It was very warm," said Terekhoff, "he had unbuttoned his coat and his uniform."

"All right, don't gabble. Moisha, Vassia, you will remain here to watch the wife of Comrade Kusskoff. Under no pretext must she leave her room. As for you, son of a dog," he added, turning to the soldier, speak, what have you done with the Natch-Div.? You have helped him to escape?!"

"Don't swear at me, you have no right to insult me; no one has the right to do that nowadays," said Terekhoff, looking with eyes full of hatred at Volodka. "I have nothing to do with it. The body of the Natch-Div. is there, behind the barracks of the Hussars. God have mercy upon his soul!"

Volodka went up to Terekhoff and struck him across the mouth with the butt of his pistol. "Speak, you rascal," he cried, "or you will be made to speak at the Tchrezvytchaika."*

"What else can I say?" answered Terekhoff, spitting blood, "God is a witness."

* The principal institution of the Tcheka was situated on the Gorokhovaya.

"I forbid you to mention your God in my presence, you vermin. Speak! Has he run away?"

Terekhoff was silent.

"Aliosha, Jenia, take him to the Tchrezvytchaika. And you, comrade commissar, please follow us, too. As to that daughter of a dog, yonder," he cried to Dolgopoloff and Rubintchik as he went along the corridor, "watch over her, and break open the door, so that she may always be under your eyes!"

The same motor-car, a light Ford, took them to the Gorokhovaya.

The evening was setting in. A crimson sunset was glowing behind the Admiralty; its spire with the little ship on the top of it,—the fancy of Peter the Great, shone like gold. The streets seemed deserted. A few women of the militia, wearing short blue skirts and caps of the same color and carrying revolvers, were walking up and down at the street crossings.

Several motors and motor-lorries were stationed at the entrance of the Tchrezvytchaika. People who were suspected of sympathy with the White army were arrested all over the town and brought there to be shot.

Volodka disappeared into one of the rooms. Pestriakoff and Jenitchka remained in the corridor with Blagovestchensky and Terekhoff.

"You must speak according to your conscience, Terekhoff," said the commissar. "May be the Natch-Div. did run away after all. I thought him very

strange this morning. He kept smiling to himself all the time."

"Well, and what if he did smile? He loved fighting. At the front he was always smiling or singing when he heard the guns. He had the heart of a soldier . . . that is why his men worshipped him!"

"Yes, . . . certainly, . . . but still, . . . you must tell the truth . . . think of me."

"Much you think of us, you and yours," mused Terekhoff.

About an hour later Volodka made his appearance in the corridor, accompanied by two tchekists. Blagoveshtchensky was made to enter a large unfurnished room, which was already full of people. Terekhoff was led away to the end of the corridor and shown into a small room brilliantly lighted by electricity. The window panes were lined with cardboard. Close to the window stood a locksmith's bench with pincers fastened to it by a screw. All kinds of locksmith's tools were scattered upon the bench. A young tchekist in a leather vest sat at a little table on one side of the room. He had a handsome face and long dark hair. Paper and pencils lay in front of him. A workman, his hair cut in the Russian style and held in on his forehead by a narrow leather strap, and a young boy of about fifteen with sunken in cheeks and large evil eyes, stood behind the bench. The air in the room was cold and heavy.

"Sidor Terekhoff, soldier of the Red Army?" enquired the tchekist, putting on his eye-glasses.

"Present," answered Terekhoff. "Tell me, in God's name, why am I here?"

"Excuse me," interrupted the tchekist. "Will you tell me in what circumstances the Natch Div., Comrade Kusskoff, perished?"

"He wanted to make the men undertake a counter-attack. He had just left the barracks, crying out to them: 'Follow me, comrades!' He had unbuttoned his greatcoat and uniform. . . . I saw him fall."

"Was he on foot or on horseback?"

"On horseback."

"All right, go on."

"I saw him fall. He lay there, his legs stuck apart, blood flowing from his wound. I took off his coat and uniform and got on his horse."

"And the enemy, Sidor Terekhoff?"

"The enemy? The White troops?"

"Yes, the White troops."

"They were firing away like hell. Our men were demoralised."

"And you?"

"No, thank God, I was all right."

"Comrade, are you quite sure the Natch-Div. did not run away?"

"Quite sure, I am not blind."

"Comrades," said the tchekist. "Help us to question him."

The workman with the leather strap on the forehead and two other fellows led Terekhoff up to the bench. He did not resist, probably not realising what

they were going to do with him. The workmen caught hold of his hands, straightened out his fingers and introduced them into the pincers, tightening the screw.

"And so . . . you deny that the Natch-Div. ran away to the enemy?" gently asked the tchekist.

"You can do with me what you like," said Terekhoff, "I will not take back my words."

He was as pale as a sheet. Big drops of sweat stood out on his forehead.

"Tighten the screw, comrade."

The workman obeyed.

"Is he dead?"

"He is dead," murmured Terekhoff, in a barely audible voice.

"Tighten the screw," repeated the tchekist. Thick dark blood spurted from under the nails of the soldier.

"You say he was killed?"

Terekhoff did not answer. His face turned grey, his eyes were bright with tears. He was muttering a prayer.

"He was killed?"

"He will not speak now," said the boy. "He has begun to pray."

"Drive in the tacks!" shouted the tchekist in a shrill voice.

The boy took a handful of small tacks and began to drive them under Terekhoff's finger nails.

"The Socialist Workmen and Peasants' Government will make the spit-lickers of capital speak the truth,"

said the tchekist, coming up to his victim. "Speak, son of a dog!"

Terekhoff continued to pray.

The tchekist drew out his revolver and dealt Terekhoff a blow on the cheek with its butt. The man reeled and fainted.

"Take him away, comrades," said the tchekist, kicking him with his foot as they carried the half dead man past him.

Terekhoff came to late in the night. He was lying on the dirty floor of a small room, dimly lit by a little lamp. There were about thirty men in the room, officers of the Red Army and several workmen. Blagoveshtchensky was pacing up and down the room, shrugging his shoulders.

The door opened from time to time. A whiff of sour ammoniacal smell penetrated into the room. The uncouth head of the old warden appeared at the door, and the hoarse, tired voice called out a name. He cried out to some of them: "You are called to be questioned," to others: "you are free . . . to town with your things!" while others heard the short sinister summons: "Without your baggage," and, making the sign of the cross, those would hastily say good-bye to their companions and leave the room. Some of them wept.

The night dragged on, full of anguish. Terekhoff lay on the floor, racked with pain, clenching his teeth so as not to scream. He was horribly thirsty.

The door opened once more.

"Ivan Blagoveshtchensky . . . Sidor Terekhoff . . . without luggage!" "We are going to be shot," muttered Terekhoff, rising with an effort and walking to the door. Blagoveshtchensky followed him, exclaiming:

"It cannot be! . . . it cannot be! . . . They are socialists after all! It cannot be!"

## XXVI.

When the lock gave way and Moisha appeared in the doorway, Natasha understood that Blagoveshtchensky had deceived her, that Fedor Michailovitch had not been killed, but had been able to escape. She dropped on her knees and thanked God for His mercy. She did not hear Moisha calling his companion in the corridor or his blasphemous words. With her back turned to the communists, afraid to pray before the ikon lest they should profane it, she gazed at the sunset, murmuring the words of a new prayer she had learnt in church during those terrible days.

She prayed and did not hear the other communists returning. She did not rise from her knees until they burst into her room, with obscene songs and gestures.

Days and nights succeeded one another, insults, all the abominations of which the diabolical fancy of these communists, who had renounced God, were capable, were showered upon her. Natasha took no food. No one came to see her. No one knew that her room had become one of the most terrible prisons of all those instituted in Russia by Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin.

She could hardly breathe in the nauseous atmosphere of this room, but her courage never abated, she continued to pray for her husband, for her children:

Svietik, Igor, Oleg and Lisa. She seemed to see them and talk to them.

Ten days later, she was taken away somewhere very far. She was brought into a room in the middle of which stood a large bed with piles of pillows on it. She was stripped naked and thrown on the bed. The room immediately filled with people; Chinese with yellow faces and long black tresses, Letts with prominent cheekbones, and a horribly disfigured soldier.

Natasha seemed to be in a dream. They all suddenly disappeared and she seemed to hear a soft music; a dazzling light flooded the room. She was standing at the bottom of a lofty white staircase with glittering steps which seemed to reach the sky. She glanced upwards and stopped in rapture. Under the transparent vault of the sky, spangled with stars in broad daylight, sat the Virgin Mary, clad in beautiful raiment. Her celestial eyes were full of indescribable mercy.

Angels in flowing white robes sat on the steps of the staircase; Natasha saw their radiant faces, their golden curls, their fluttering wings. The air was full of the fragrance of spring flowers.

She began to go slowly up the steps. She suffered great pain. The steps were steep and their edges were sharp. She fell upon her knees, rose and fell again. Her feet were bruised and covered with blood.

She held out her arms to the Virgin and went slowly on.

Coarse laughter and jokes filled the room where Natasha was lying, . . . but she did not hear them.

An unknown celestial music filled her ears. The angels were singing in measured tones and their voices went up to Heaven. They held golden instruments, resembling harps, in their hands, and when they ceased to sing they struck the chords, which rang out sweetly before the sound died away.

Natasha continued her progress up the steps. Round her neck she wore the small golden cross she had on when she took leave of her husband. She had consecrated herself to martyrdom that night, . . . and now . . . the martyrdom had come.

But where was she? What was happening to her? Her sufferings had ceased. She suddenly felt wonderfully calm and happy. Voices were melting and dying away in the blue vault of the sky. Wings were fluttering. The Throne of the Immaculate Virgin was coming nearer and nearer to her.

Natasha saw women from the earth sitting at the feet of the Virgin, young and old. All of them had calm and happiness apparent on their faces.

The higher she rose, the easier it seemed to be. The steps were growing shallower and wider and were strewn with white lilies and roses. She was afraid to look back. She felt that she had never before attained to such heights.

Minutes went by, . . . hours, . . . days, . . . eternity itself, may be.

Natasha went onward like the fragrant morning dew, carrying the prayers and the sighs of the earth towards the blue sky.

She came to for a moment. She saw ruffled, dirty hair, narrow, piercing eyes with white eyelashes, a hairy chest.

Somebody said: "She seems to be dead, . . . but wait . . . the body is still warm."

The hairy chest pressed against her.

Her sight grew dim. She held out her arms with a gesture of despair, and felt the touch of fresh, firm fingers upon her hands. Her strength returned to her and she lifted her head.

Mary, the Immaculate, had risen from the ivory throne, inlaid with gold, and was bending over Natasha and drawing her nearer to herself. Natasha saw tears dropping from her beautiful eyes. And as they dropped on the marble steps, these tears were transformed into pearls, and the women who sat at the feet of the Virgin were collecting these pearls and adorning an ikon with them.

Natasha glanced at this ikon. The Virgin was represented on it without the Child. Her sorrowful face was gazing down upon churches in flames, and upon men put to torture. The churches were Russian . . . Orthodox churches.

The Mother of God was weeping over Russia. The women were adorning her tunic and her veil with pearls. There were rows of them, and they played and shimmered like the folds of a celestial tissue.

Natasha could not take her eyes off this wonderful ikon. She read upon it the following inscription in

old Slavonic characters: "Mother of God, Patroness of all the fallen and unfortunate."

Natasha understood: Russia had fallen; but the Virgin would intercede for it before God and God would save Russia.

She lifted her glance, full of gratitude, towards the Holy Virgin, but she could not distinguish the features of the Immaculate Mother of God. Her face was as dazzling as the sun on a clear summer's day. The air was like a golden ripple. The last chords of the angels' choir were dying away in powerful harmony.

Natasha's soul was moving into infinite spaces.

# PART THREE

## I.

A BITTER March gale was blowing in gusts from the sea. It ruffled the great blue waves, covered the bay with foam, and, rushing in between the two stone piers, cut the faces and stopped the breath of the passers-by.

All that was happening in Novorossyisk in these days was like a dream, a terrible and incomprehensible nightmare, to Igrunka. In the port, where red railway carriages were piled up anyhow, huge boxes were loaded day and night on the murky, smoky steamboats. English destroyers were lined up on the blue-green surface of the water. Tricolored flags waved in the air. Everybody looked scared. The end of the world seemed to be near. Igrunka did not know what to do. He was waiting for orders from Brovtzin, but he had no news of the Tchernobylsky Hussars and did not even know if his commander were alive. He made inquiries everywhere, with no results.

On March 14th and 15th, Volunteers and Cossacks dressed in torn and shabby English overcoats streamed into Novorossyisk. The dusty, white road was blocked with lean, shaggy horses, Cossack saddlery and effects. A few leaders dozed in the sun waiting for the decision of the authorities: would they or would they not take the horses with them?

Igrunka strode up and down the quay, where a motley crowd of people were jostling and elbowing one another, swearing and cursing at their fate, or else silently making their way to the gang-planks of the ships.

He caught sight for a moment of his eldest brother, Svietik, among the crowd of sun-burnt young men. Igrunka wanted to cry out to him. But it was too late, he had disappeared into one of the ships. Oleg also passed, slender and tall. Igrunka stopped him, but Oleg looked at his brother vacantly, and made a gesture of despair.

"This is chaos," he said.

"What about you?" asked Igrunka.

"I am waiting for my Cossacks."

"And I—for my Hussars."

They separated.

Igrunka could not make up his mind to leave Novorossyisk. He thought it dishonorable. He was waiting for his Hussars.

"They may have joined the Greens," said his friend Makedonsky.

"Wait a moment . . . Brovtzin . . . Brovtzin . . .? Eh, my dear fellow, they were retreating to Bessarabia when we were cut off," interrupted his neighbor.

"What happened?"

"I hardly know. The Cossacks betrayed us, or, may be we were to blame. Anyhow, things went to the Devil."

"Well, what on earth am I to do?"

"Come with us."

"I must wait for orders from my chiefs."

"Trust to luck, Kusskoff. We may yet be in Moscow by Easter!"

A fresh crowd of people separated him from his companions. Old Cossacks were making their way past him, carrying boxes and knapsacks, casting angry looks at this idle officer.

"It seems we are to leave our horses behind," said one of them.

"Yes, the order is to go on board without them."

"What is a Cossack without his horse?"

"That is the authorities' business."

A strong wind was still blowing from the sea, wetting the passers-by with salt water. One could distinctly hear the bells on the British ships; the sirens of the transport boats whistled incessantly.

Night had fallen. Igrunka, hungry and shivering, went along the dark streets, dimly lit by a new moon. He ascended the hill on his way to the town, stopping from time to time to look back upon the white rays of the moon playing over the water. He fancied he could hear the buzz and hum of the crowds on the ships.

The abandoned horses shied at his approach, and then returned to him sighing and sniffing, as though wondering if he were not one of their masters. Dark shadows lurked about in the streets, knocking at the doors of the houses and eyeing Igrunka suspiciously. A cold breeze was blowing, bringing with it the smell

of the sea and coal. Single rifle shots resounded in the mountains. The stars overhead glittered in the dark sky, the crescent of the moon seemed to smile a sly, cunning smile. The reflection of a fire illuminated the sky in the direction of the Standart, lighting up the slopes of the mountains. Cries and moans, full of despair, came from the Stanitchka quarter and Igrunka fancied he heard the smashing of window panes.

At the restaurant "Slon," lights filtered through the chinks of the closed shutters; voices and the laughter of women came to his ears.

He turned to the left, into the Vorontzovskaia. There was a small, white, one-storied house, with three windows, on the right side of the street. A sign-board hung above the entrance door, with the inscription: "Goldenzweig, Dentist." The owner seemed absent. The house had for some time been occupied by a general and his wife, and one of the rooms had been requisitioned for Igrunka. The wife of the dentist had moved to the kitchen with her two children, two and five years old. Igrunka had never seen the woman, but had caught a glimpse of the children. They were pretty, especially the eldest, a little girl with laughing black eyes and black curly hair hanging down her back. They hid whenever they saw him and stared at him from their hiding place with large, scared, curious eyes.

The general and his wife had left Novorossyisk. When Igrunka went up the steps that night, an invisible hand drew back the bolt and he heard hurried

footsteps retiring into the depth of the little entrance hall. Igrunka entered his room, dimly lit by the moon. A large soft bed, covered with an eiderdown, with clean pillows, was placed against the wall. Someone had tidied the room and moved the furniture during his absence. A woman's nightdress was spread out on the pillows. The mistress of the house had evidently intended to use the room.

The children were moving restlessly behind the wooden partition. He heard a woman's impatient voice saying:

"Be quiet, Rosa, it is time to sleep."

"But I am so hot, mamma."

Igrunka sat down on a chair by the window.

"I thought you had gone, sir," said a voice on the other side of the wall. "May I come in to fetch my things?"

"Please do."

The woman came in. She was bare-footed, in a short, white skirt with a dark shawl thrown over her shoulders. Her slender silhouette and high head-dress were clearly distinguishable in the semi-darkness of the room. She took her nightgown and hid it under her shawl.

"Why haven't you left?" she asked, in a warm, musical voice.

"There was no room on the ships."

"But the other officers managed to go," said the woman, stopping in the door.

"I didn't care to push and fight."

"Will you join the Reds?" she suddenly asked.

"No."

"They'll be here to-morrow," she said. "Where will you go? The neighborhood isn't safe. The Greens are all over the place. There is no other way but the sea."

Igrunka did not answer. The woman remained at the door.

"Have you had any supper?"

"No."

"I'll bring you something to eat."

She disappeared. Igrunka heard a clatter of plates in the kitchen. He remained near the window, pondering over the situation in which he found himself. If the Reds entered the town in the morning . . . he could not escape death.

"What does it matter after all!" he thought. "Russia does not exist any more . . . well . . . I shall perish with her!"

He fingered his heavy Mauser.

"To-morrow . . . but there is still to-day . . . and who knows what will happen to-morrow?"

The woman returned with a lamp; she spread a pink cloth, with a fantastic flower-design, on the table, brought in plates, knives and forks, a cold leg of mutton, some eggs, a bottle of wine, a tea-pot and some white bread. She set the table and left the room. She was young, her complexion was smooth, her hair was dark and she had a delicate profile. A few lines that went from the nose to the chin made

her look older than she was. Her hands were small and well cared for.

Igrunka ate with great appetite. Then he went out and sat down on the steps by the front door.

## II.

The night had fallen, solemn and beautiful, and seemed to call for adventures. The moon was reflected in the water. A pyramidal poplar, denuded of foliage, stood like a ghost close to the house. The sea-waves splashed gently on the beach. The silvery sound of a bell came from one of the men-of-war.

Igrunka sat on the steps enjoying the witchery of the still, warm night. The wind had fallen and the air was soft. He felt young and strong, as free as the wind . . . and the sensation was a pleasant one.

The past was the past. There was no future. But there was still to-day. "To-day" was the silver ray of the moon, the smell of the sea, the infinite spaces that seemed to beckon to him.

The moon was now but a distant strip on the horizon. It disappeared and darkness set in.

Someone—a woman—softly sat down beside him on the stone step. He felt the warmth of her body. A small hand was placed upon his knee. He turned his head. The face of his hostess was close to his. She was gazing into the distance with a serious and concentrated expression. Her eyes were shining, but her face was sad. Igrunka put his arm round her . . . she trembled and crept close to him. He bent down

and timidly kissed her cheek . . . she surrendered to his caress.

"Let us go in," she said, "it is getting cold."

She led the way, without turning her head, carefully closing the door behind them. She put out the lamp and began to undress. Igrunka sat on a chair, and started awkwardly to pull off his boots.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Sarah," answered the woman.

She was lying beside him; her hair was undone and was tickling his neck. One of the children began to cry in the next room.

"Are these children yours?"

"Yes," said Sarah in a sleepy voice, curling up deeper in the bed. She put her warm, scented hand under Igrunka's head, kissed him goodnight and prepared to go to sleep.

"Are you married?"

"I am a widow."

"Is your husband dead?"

"He was killed two years ago."

"Who killed him?"

"The Volunteers."

"Why did they do it?"

"They said he was a Bolshevik, and they shot him."

"He was—" said Igrunka, with a shiver.

"A dentist," answered Sarah, who was half asleep. "I helped him with his work. Sleep—don't think about anything."

Igrunka wanted to get up and leave her; he wanted

to ask questions . . . and could not. An unspeakable terror had got hold of him; leering phantoms seemed to surround him. He could not understand.

She was sleeping beside him, pressing her warm, soft body against his. The Volunteers had killed her husband, and he, Igrunka, was an officer of the Volunteer Army. To-morrow the Reds would come. Was there a limit to all these sins, or had they become countless?

He could not sleep. He saw the first pale rays of dawn stealing across the sky, and a pale light filtering into the room. The woman's head was on the pillow beside him. Her face was pale and serious.

Her closed eyelashes threw dark shadows upon her face. What was she dreaming of? What was going on in this little head, behind this pure white forehead, framed in dark hair. Igrunka was afraid to move. He felt full of tenderness and fear, of pity and terror. He would have liked to read the thoughts of this woman in order to understand this new universe, where there were no more conventions, and to realise whether this freedom meant happiness—or a great misfortune. He felt as though the phantom of the husband, killed by the Volunteers, would suddenly appear and stretch his cold body between them.

She made a movement, opened her dark eyes, looking at Igrunka for a moment, as though wondering why he was there, then she smiled, put her arm round him and kissed his face.

"You are already awake?" she said.

She got up and brought him tea. Her cheeks were pink, she looked sleepy, but her hair was pinned up. She had washed and smelt of fresh water.

"Why did you love me, Sarah?" asked Igrunka.

Sarah looked at him for some time.

"You are so handsome," she said at last. "I have been watching you all the time. And yesterday I felt so sorry for you when you told me you did not wish to surrender to the Reds. You are to be pitied indeed."

"You don't like the Reds?"

"How can I like them? . . . I hate them! If it were not for my children, I should throw myself into the sea, or else go away, straight in front of me. They are savage brutes."

She was walking up and down the room. Her bosom was heaving with indignation, and tears were glistening in her eyes.

"I will save you," she went on in a trembling voice. "I thought of it yesterday. Just wait for me here; I will fetch a man I know . . . he is kind . . . he will do what he can for you; we shall think of something together. You are such a dear, so well bred. And you have blue eyes, like a girl."

## III.

Sarah soon returned accompanied by a tall dark man wearing a smart, short overcoat.

"Demosthenes Atlantidi," he introduced himself. His languid eyes, the eyes of a Levantine, measured Igrunka from head to foot.

Igrunka bowed.

"Captain Kusskoff, there is no time to lose in useless conversation. The Bolsheviks have passed the Perevalnaia. In an hour's time their detachments will reach the suburbs. The citizens of Novorossyisk, the traitors, are decorating the streets with Red flags in their honor. The Greens are plundering the houses. Do you wish, yes or no, to leave at once for Constantinople?"

Igrunka bowed once more in silence.

"But I must warn you that you will be a simple sailor."

Igrunka saluted.

"You must change your clothes. Madam Goldenzweig will help you to find some."

"I have my late husband's clothes. Come into my room, sir."

Five minutes later Igrunka was looking at himself reflected from head to foot in a tall looking glass.

"I look like a scarecrow," he thought, "but I am handsome all the same."

Sarah was evidently of the same opinion. She threw herself on the young man's neck and kissed him passionately.

Igrunka readjusted his clothes and showed himself to Atlantidi, standing at attention in front of him.

"Here I am, Sir."

The Greek burst out laughing.

"I am afraid, Captain, that you will turn the heads of all the girls in Batum and Constantinople."

A soft felt hat with a faded, moth-eaten brim, was jauntily set on the fair curls of the young officer. A shabby black coat, much too big and too short for him, its waist coming up to his shoulder blades, barely covered his back. Grey checked trousers, a red woolen scarf, brand new shoes and an overcoat, thrown over his shoulders, completed the costume. He had not risked putting on the overcoat, which did not reach to his knees. "This will do," said Atlantidi, "you can get a sailor's outfit at Batum."

They went down to the sea and followed the dusty road. The Cossack horses were still there. Some of them were standing close to the water, craning their necks and dumbly gazing into the blue distance as though waiting for their masters to return; others remained in the middle of the road, dismally hanging down their heads. Furniture and household things, boxes containing valuables, were scattered about. Railway carriages, some full, some empty, stood about on

the rails. Igrunka noticed in one of them a set of elegant drawing-room furniture with light blue plush coverings and several paintings, while under it lay the body of a man in tatters in a pool of blood. The dead body of a little girl of about five, with a bruised and swollen face, was stretched on the sand at the edge of the road. Two men appeared from behind the carriages and glanced suspiciously at Atlantidi, but the Greek walked on, with a firm and resolute step, as though he were master of the situation.

The road leading to the cement works was a long one. There was a strong smell of burning. Beams, blackened by fire, lay between charred trees. Thick white smoke clung to the ground, red sparks glimmered here and there, but the fire was slowly dying.

They passed through the gates. Three days ago, Igrunka had seen a smart British guard standing there and handsome motorcars driving out of these gates. Now everything was deserted. The windows were broken, suspicious looking individuals were wandering about the buildings. Igrunka and his companion rounded the light-house of the pier, and once more went down to the sea, where a large sail boat was anchored. Five men lay stretched out on the shore. Except one of them, a Greek, short and thickset, they were dressed as fantastically as Igrunka. The Greek wore a dark sailor's vest, trousers of rough cloth and a sailor's cap with a gold anchor. He went up to Atlantidi, who said to him:

"I have brought you another one, Stepan Leonidovitch, have you enough men now?"

"Can you cook? Can you be a watchman?" the stout man asked Igrunka abruptly.

"Don't frighten him, Parcelli. He'll manage all right."

"Yes, Captain," said Igrunka, saluting. The men burst out laughing.

Parcelli turned to Atlantidi and began to talk rapidly to him in Greek.

## IV.

At noon the wind began to freshen. The masts creaked, the mainsail swelled, and the skipper gave the order to tighten the stays. White foam capped the waves and fell away hissing from the sides of the schooner. The "Fortuna" carried a heavy cargo of boxes and barrels covered up with tarpaulin, upon which the crew slept without mattresses or pillows. The little double-bedded cabin was occupied by the captain and the mate.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon. Igrunka was at the helm. The men had just finished their meal, consisting of lard soup, and gone down to sleep in the hold. The captain had joined the mate, who was already snoring away in the cabin. Igrunka was alone on deck.

"And so," he mused, "Igor Kusskoff, gentleman—but there are no more classes, all are equals! Son of a general—but there are no more grades or distinctions of any kind, they have all been abolished. All right! Student of the Cadet Corps, of the Company of His Majesty the Emperor—but there is no Emperor, and who can tell if the Cadet Corps itself exists? Member of the Cavalry School—oh sadness . . . mortal an-

guish . . . lost hopes . . . hush, my heart, be silent! All this is the past! Captain in the Regiment of the Tchernobylsky Hussars! Spasskoié . . . Maia . . . Léka . . . everything has gone!

"It was all very well for Aunt Lipotchka to tell us that our grandmother, a saintly woman, had lived at court and had known several languages . . . that she herself, Aunt Lipotchka, had had a governess, Mademoiselle Suzanne . . . that our great-grandfather had been in command of an army corps and had been a person of great importance. Lost days, those! We spend a night with Sarah, . . . a month ago it was with the little nurse of the field hospital . . . and before that, with that holiday visitor at Gagry by the Sea. These are the conquests of the revolution. Whatever happens, the less one thinks about it the better. Sarah . . . at least I know her by name, but that little nurse was simply a nurse and I am blessed if I ever knew hers! This is life up to date! Is all this good, or bad . . . I wonder? Mother would say . . . but I would not have told mother about it, and if she had been there, all this would never have happened. I wonder what our grandfathers and grandmothers, and our great-grandfather, who commanded an army corps . . . would have thought of us?

"The conquests of the revolution. I live on them. Who are the people I am with now? What boat is this? Who is the captain? As far as I am concerned, I can't complain of anything. They treat me fairly

well. By the time we had made sail and taken in the sheets I had made friends with everyone on board."

"Who are you?—an officer?" a boy of about seventeen, with clear brown eyes, had asked him. "I thought so. I am a pupil of the Cadet Corps. When the Corps was evacuated onto a ship, I remained on land. I wanted to fight, to join a regiment. But look what this war has come to. I was lucky to fall in with Atlantidi and sign on with him. If we manage to unload our cargo at Batum, we shall earn a good bit of money, and buy some togs. My name is Misha. I have been with Atlantidi for a fortnight. I began by washing up in the kitchen, and then we loaded our cargo at night and watched over it. The fair man who joined us the other day is a Cossack, Kostia Derbentzeff. He had lost touch with his regiment and they did not accept him anywhere else. The mate is a real sailor. He was with the Bolsheviks. They sent him here to carry on propaganda, but he got enthused about the Volunteers and served on one of our men-of-war, the 'Rion,' but left it. He did not like the idea of retreating. As to the old cook, he is a tramp, a Little-Russian, Ignat Podorojny."

Such was the little world of the "Fortuna," not counting the captain,—Kostia, Misha, Kolka and Ignat. They had all fed together out of the same earthenware dish. Ignat had pushed the pieces of lard with his wooden spoon towards Igrunka, saying:

"Eat if you are hungry, this is your ration. Everyone has a right to two pieces."

After dinner Misha had come up to him and had whispered into his ear:

"I shall sleep beside you, Igrunetchka. I am afraid of Ignat."

Which was better? . . . this fraternal, almost animal life with Kostia, Misha, Kolka and Ignat, Sarah, the little nurse, the impressions of yesterday, this white sail on the blue waves, the infinite space of the sea, the hissing of the white foam, the whistling of the wind in the shrouds . . . or . . . all that complicated life that he had left behind?

Yesterday he had been in the clutches of an unspeakable terror, he had been sick at heart at the sight of the scenes which met his eye. Those abandoned horses, dying of hunger in the dusty streets, that dead child, that body lying under the railway carriage with plush furniture, that babel of humanity crowding into the ships. "The Bolsheviks say that one's country, one's home and one's family are but a prejudice. My father serves with the Bolsheviks. The whole world is my country and all humanity is my family. Misha Likhareff, Kolka Puzir and Ignat Podorojny are as dear to me as my own brothers and my sister Lisa.

"I am alive! The sun shines and the air is warm. The blue waves are running over the surface of the sea and the foam plays round the ship. I am alive; and my eyes roam over the wide expanse unchecked. All principles of morality have been cast away. There is only 'me'—'myself' that really counts."

The revolution had rejected all the commandments

of God he had been taught in his childhood. New principles were being proclaimed, the meaning of which was: "Everything is allowed! Everything is possible! Your hour has come! Take all you can of life and enjoy it!"

And it had become possible for an officer of the Tchernobylsky Hussars to be upon watch at the helm of a schooner carrying stolen goods. Everything had become possible.

A feeling of unlimited liberty, of wide perspectives had got hold of him. His head was in a whirl and his heart was beating, as it did when he used to climb to the dome of St. Isaac's Cathedral and glance downwards. The houses looked like children's toys, the passers-by like flies, and beyond were the waters of the bay, the fields and forests and the sea. He felt strong and powerful as he soared thus above the universe.

The air-men who ascended in airplanes to the skies, the lightning-men who devoured space in their motors, had conquered air and distance, and the ancient precepts of morality had become too narrow for them. Igrunka was beginning to understand these new men, and as he threw himself into the abyss, he decided to accept the new precepts of morality, which he summed up in the following words:

"I, and today. There are no others and there is no tomorrow."

## V.

Igrunka set before himself the task of becoming first among equals, which was not difficult. He was the only educated man among ignorant companions. Whatever he put his hand to, turned out well, and soon it was no more the mate, Kolka Puzir, but Igrunka who helped the skipper shape the course of the schooner. They studied the chart together and altered their route, taking short cuts across stretches of the open sea, instead of hugging the coast, with the result that they shortened their voyage by a whole day. He soon knew his way about in the kitchen, and when he replaced Podorojny, the whole of the crew and the captain himself, praised his cooking. He appropriated Kolka's accordion, and, instead of the eternal dance music of the "Kamarinskaia"—the only tune its owner could play, Igrunka trained the men to sing, and formed a quartette, teaching them all sorts of songs. He helped Stepan Leonidovitch to take the motor engine to pieces, cleaned and repaired it, and now they only had to take in a supply of petroleum at Batum. In stormy weather Puzir and he were the only ones who were able to remain at the wheel. All the others were sick. He could also stand a good deal of wine.

When everybody about him was the worse for drink, he was firm on his legs and bold in his speech.

"I am a true sea-wolf," he said to himself with satisfaction, and when he went ashore he swaggered along with his hands in his pockets, a revolver on his hip and a long knife behind his belt. He was often mistaken for a Bolshevik, but he did not mind it. Surrounded by his admirers, Kostia, Misha, Kolka and Ignat, he went with a crowd of sailors drinking in the public houses and cut-throat dens of Poti and Sokum. He won a lot of money at cards, his pockets were always full of dirty Volunteer, Don, Georgian and Imperial paper rubles, which he exchanged for pounds and dollars. The nights were veritable orgies: drinking, shouting, dancing the "lezghinka," or a dashing sailors' jig with some shameless Armenian girl as partner, or a wild "cake-walk," accompanied by the shouts and laughter of tipsy sailors and longshoremen. The glitter of his blue eyes subdued even the most insolent and audacious of them and no one dared touch him. Bold and generous, strong and handsome, he was the idol of the quays, docks and jetties. He had an innate grace which conquered the crowd. He could swear like a trooper, knock down a man with a blow of his fist and gallantly kiss the hand of a flower girl who happened to catch his fancy.

He could allow himself anything he liked. Alone in a crowd of brutish sailors—Russians, Turks and Georgians, of Bolsheviks, socialists and anarchists, a mob of beings human only in shape, whose brains were

befuddled with the teachings of socialist trash pamphlets, he would jump upon the table, with a glass of wine in his hand, and cry out, his eyes suddenly grown dark and threatening:

"Three cheers for Great Russia! and her Emperor to come! Hurrah!"

The tavern shook with the cheering.

"Sing, you villains, you foul-mouthed good-for-nothings and you street girls, sing: 'Boje Tzaria Khrani!' Be human, cease to be brutes for once!"

Discordant voices took up the National Anthem, "God Save the Czar." Igrunka's powerful and mellow tenor joined in, followed by Misha's barytone and Kostia and Ignat. Their quartette rendered all this hubbub harmonious.

And when a socialist in his turn attempted to jump on the table, crying out: "Comrades, this is . . ."

Igrunka cut him short, crying out in a still louder voice:

"Don't dare to comrade us, you blackguard! We are sailors, and you, you are the scum of the earth . . . intellectual vermin . . . a blabbing gramophone. Away with him! . . . boys, give him hell!"

With a clever blow of his fist he knocked the would-be-orator down, and a free fight ensued.

They had given him the nickname of "White Wolf" on the Fortuna, on account of his light hair and delicate complexion, which had not been tanned even by the exposure to wind and sun. In days gone by the "White Wolf" had for fun learnt to use the tricks

of jiu-jitsu by means of which he was now able to inflict severe punishment on any blustering braggart. First among equals, he could outblackguard the most atrocious blackguard of the whole crowd, and there was nobody who could say him nay in anything. In Batum the crew smartened themselves up with new clothes. Parcelli's operations had been successful. They were openly unloading at the Georgian custom-house, but mysterious negotiations with some black-turbaned Adjars were on foot concerning the place where their new cargo was to be loaded. Igrunka alone was initiated into the secret. They were going to carry contraband goods and they might have to fight. Igrunka was full of martial ardor.

The golden mimosas were in full bloom at Batum. The soft and powdery little balls knocked at the windows of the houses, and their sweet, entrancing smell invited to languorous day-dreaming. The warm sea murmured gently; its long regular billows died away on the pink shale of the beach, along which the strange foliage of the boulevard tamarisks streamed in the breeze. The azaleas were covered with rose and white flowers, spring was entering in state, arrayed in all the glory of sub-tropical flora.

## VI.

In Constantinople Igrunka had a row with Parcelli, who had not paid his shipmates their due.

"You may be unjust to me," he said, "but I will not allow you to wrong my pals! Understand?"

His glance was so significant that Parcelli gave in. He paid his debt in full, but Igrunka had to leave the Fortuna. He did not particularly grieve about it. He bought a smart grey suit in a second-hand shop, had his hair trimmed and his hands manicured and spent his days at Tokotlian's, the best restaurant in Constantinople, in the Grande Rue de Pera.

People mistook him for a young diplomat.

Money came and went. Where did it come from? He would have been at a loss to say. He was lucky at cards and at petits chevaux. He bought and resold things. There were presents from his rich lady-friends. Sometimes he would put on his old suit and work in the port loading ships. It was easier to say how the money went than how it came in. Dinners and lunches, a cup of coffee here and some ices there, wine and women.

Beyond the sea, General Wrangel was heroically holding on to the last bit of Russian land. It left Igrunka cold. His brothers were very likely there . . .

and his father might be there too, but in the army of Comrade Frunse. He could not get the sense of it all. If the rallying cry of either of the fighting sides had been "for Faith, for Czar and for Country," it might have been different. He would not have hesitated about taking sides and being judge between his father and his brothers. The watch-word was lacking.

When the Poles were at war with Russia, his sympathies were on the side of his father—fighting against foreigners, against the foes of Russia. But Igrunka could not make himself join the Bolsheviks. Whenever the thought of it began troubling his mind, he drowned it in wine and vice.

On a cold and rainy autumn day General Wrangel's ships arrived. The men, starving and dying of thirst, were huddled together like cattle on the decks. But their spirit was undaunted, and when General Wrangel passed in his launch, he was cheered with a thunderous "hurrah" which made Igrunka's heart beat faster.

He searched for and found his brother Oleg and de Roberti.

They took a corner table at Tokotlian's, presenting a striking contrast to the casual observer: Igrunka in his smart clothes, Oleg in his Cossack uniform all faded and torn, and de Roberti in a British army tunic, also the worse for wear.

Their random conversation came to rest on the battle of Perekop—the last stand of the Volunteers in the Crimea.

"That is just the point . . . there wasn't anything that might have been called fortification," said Oleg.

"They came on, advancing in serried ranks, although our guns would mow them down like grass," said de Roberti.

"And the cold was intense," added Oleg. "Goodness knows through whose fault, our men had not received their overcoats in time. In our worn out blouses we were obliged to bury ourselves in sheaves of corn for the night. We felt so stiff in the morning that we could hardly move. Brovtzin has been killed. Your regiment exists no more. Sister Serebrennikova is in Poland. We have no horses."

"And hardly any arms."

"And what about you?" said Oleg.

"Well, there is not much to tell. At Vorojba I found out from the Red prisoners," answered Igrunka, —and stopped short, looking through the large window of the café at the flow of people in the street, where in the crowd could be seen many grey Russian and tan English overcoats of the Volunteers.

"What did you find out? . . ." asked Oleg.

"That father was there, with them. . . ."

"Yes, I know. . . . Svietik told me. So you knew it, too?"

"Yes."

The orchestra, composed of a piano, a violin, a cello and an ocarina, was playing a pot-pourri of the "Chimes of Normandy."

"Let's go," said Igrunka, "I can't bear it any longer."

They went down the wide stone staircase, leading to the sea, between two rows of houses of uneven height, with ropes stretched across from house to house and linen drying in the sun. The air reeked of the smell of mutton grease, of mastic, the Greek gin, incense and burnt straw. Turks and Turkish women with veiled faces were going up and down the stairs. Igrunka stopped at the entrance of a café.

"Oleg," he said, "have you any news of mother?"

"Mother is with God."

"What? . . . she is dead? . . . How do you know? Have you had any letters?"

"I have had no letters, but I know."

"Oleg, how can you talk like this?"

"Why? . . . she is happy!"

"Accursed times! . . ." exclaimed Igrunka. "Everything has gone to ruin. The church also has perished, and men have forgotten God."

Oleg murmured:

" 'I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'."

He started going down the steps. Igrunka ran after him. De Roberti remained at the entrance of the café.

"Oleg, are you a saint?"

"No."

"But you know everything . . . is it from God you learnt about mother?"

"I feel the presence of God. And you?"

"I? . . . No . . . I simply go on living. Ah, Oleg, I have polluted my soul . . . And Lisa, does your power of second sight tell you anything about her?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I cannot speak of it. I do not see it quite clearly yet."

"Do you forgive me?" said Igrunka.

"It is not for me to judge you."

"Will you kiss me?"

Oleg embraced his brother and kissed him lovingly.

"Where are you going?" asked Igrunka.

"To my Cossacks on the ship."

Igrunka followed his brother with his eyes as Oleg descended to the harbor, where the boats were anchored. As he was walking under the rays of the sun, it seemed as if a halo encircled his head.

## VII.

Four days later, having spent his last Turkish pound, Igrunka succeeded in finding a job as steward on board the steamboat "Styria," formerly of the Austrian Lloyd Company, requisitioned by the French. The captain was an Italian; the mate, a Slovene; the Government supercargo, a Frenchman; all three were unanimous in their admiration of the handsome, clever young steward with the blue eyes, and such a peculiar name.

"Kusskoni," the Italian called him. "Kussko," cried the Slovene, and "Küsskoff," the Frenchman.

Life on board was easy enough, but Igrunka longed for something different. The blue sea lured him farther. Plying between Constantinople and Marseilles, negotiating the famous rock of Scylla, admiring the brilliantly lit streets of Reggio, with the red and green lights flashing alternately on its lighthouse, sailing on the Tyrrhenian Sea, along the shores of the Isles of Elba and Corsica, with their old towers, lying in quarantine near Friuli in view of the grey ruins of the Castle of the Count of Monte Cristo perched up high on the yellow rocks, and, at the same time, washing dishes, bringing coffee, absinthe and soda-water into the cabins, waiting at dinner and supper, scrubbing and

sluicing the deck and polishing the brasses in the early morning,—the contrast was too great. Igrunka was born a dreamer; young as he was, he had read and seen enough of life. Passing in view of Scylla, he thought of the verses of the Odyssey, learnt by heart in his early youth. But the deeds of Achilles seemed pale and drab, the adventures of Ulysses, naive and pitiful. Achilles knew nothing about airplanes, bombs, machine-gun fire and asphyxiating gas. During the wars of Troy, the prisoners were not treated as they were by the Bolsheviks, who cut out stripes along their thighs and straps on their shoulders, and stripped the skin like gloves off their hands. The famous horse of Troy was a strategem which would not have taken in the Bolsheviks; and those of their enemies who joined the Reds, imagining that they, like some new horse of Troy, would bring contagion and disintegration into their ranks, ended simply in being shot. Ulysses had never ventured out in a storm on the sea in the Fortuna. The Greek hero's deeds seemed contemptible as compared to his own. It wanted a new Homer to sing the deeds of Igor, son of Fedor, against the Bolsheviks.

When they were passing between Corsica and Elba, he seemed to see the Man in Grey, with the Little Hat, who had been born on one and on the other had tasted the bitterness of exile. Things had been easy enough for Napoleon. "Vive l'Empereur!" they would hail him, because they were Frenchmen, easily excited to enthusiasm. Where would he have been, if, instead,

he had had to deal with Russian scepticism? What, if he had tried to harangue the "comrades" with his pyramids and the centuries that were looking down from them? They would have shouted him down, sure enough! "This is all rot!" they would have yelled. "Nothing but bourgeois prejudice. The pyramids are tokens of the Pharaohs, the policemen of Egyptian Czarism, who were the first to apply internment to the ill-fated Hebrews,—and being such tokens—they must be sent to Hades!" And they would have destroyed the Pyramids.

Munching sunflower seeds, they would have set to work. They would have laid dynamite under the pyramids and sphinxes and would have blown them up, for the Russian people have the genius of destruction. Napoleons were not the thing to conquer them. They have had Napoleons of their own, Stenka Razin for one and Emelka Pugatcheff.* But in their time there had been no Jews. Therefore they had not been able to give Moscow a drubbing strong enough to send the very soul of Russia to perdition.

Igrunka knew that a Napoleon was impossible in Russia, that there could be only a lawful Czar, anointed by grace of God.

Europe was done for. Igrunka was drawn towards America. He had admired the smart American soldiers in Constantinople. He had often sat down beside them in the cafés, listening to their conversation and

* Two famous bandit chiefs who raised rebellion, in the 17th century and in the reign of Catherine the Great.

trying to understand them. He had made out so much: that in the Argentine brave and smart officers like himself could enlist in the cavalry. There was continual warfare there, farcical revolutions in the adjoining republics were the order of the day, and the spirit of militarism prevailed. Igrunka thought of his scarlet dolman and his "pelisse woven of clouds." He dreamed of America.

In the spring of 1921, having spent all his money at the Carnival in Nice, he once more signed on as a common sailor on a dingy collier bound for South America.

Genoa, Nice, Monte Carlo, Marseilles, Barcelona, Gibraltar, Tangiers, Cape Verde, twenty days in the open ocean and then Rio de Janeiro, the most beautiful port in the world!

Igrunka decided to leave the steamer. In a corner of the forecastle, under his hammock, he had stowed away his valise, containing his dinner-jacket, his well-creased trousers, white shirts, silk socks and ties, his evening shoes and soft felt hat. He firmly believed that these clothes, his fair curly hair, blue eyes and graceful figure would open all doors to him.

He dressed carefully and went ashore in the evening, strolling into the town with two dollars in his pocket. Patches of light conjured up fragments of pictures perfect in their unexpected charm: a cluster of branches hanging over some railings and laden with blossoms of fantastic shape and color borrowed loveliness from the rays of the light that fell upon them.

Beyond—the darkness of night, the straight trunks of palm trees and, hardly discernible against the starry sky, a feathery crown of foliage. Or, the soft light of a lamp-shade revealing a hat, the tawny tip of a nose, a pair of smiling lips, enticing in their sweetness. In the glare of the lamp of a motor car, a pair of well groomed and splendidly harnessed horses standing out in high relief and looking as if coated with lacquer, while the carriage remained invisible in the darkness. A horseman in a wide brimmed hat trotted into the patch of light thrown by an open window; his horse was lean and his boots and heavy stirrups were covered with the dust of the open plains. He clattered along and disappeared into the darkness. The slightly hissing, yet melodious, accents of the Spanish language were everywhere.

People sat drinking whiskies and sodas or pomegranate syrups in front of the cafés. Mulattoes with swarthy faces, in smart white striped suits, silk socks and thin shoes, beautiful creole women with enormous black eyes and saffron colored skin, graceful and slender, wearing large earrings and showing their glittering white teeth, walked in pairs, arm in arm, with a swinging gait, softly humming a tango or a matchitch. The light of the colored lamps and chandeliers fell upon the passers-by. Delicate perfumes floated in the air. Smart officers in khaki tunics with twisted shoulder-straps and helmets; in full dress uniforms with wide scarfs, clanking their swords; pale-faced Spanish, red-haired American and dark-haired French women;

bursts of laughter, cries and exclamations, the clatter of horses' hoofs and the rolling of victorias on the wooden pavement. The whole formed a picture of easy and cloudless gaiety hitherto unknown to Igrunka. The phosphorescent sea gleamed in the distance. The reflection of the white, red and green lights of the steamers looked like fiery snakes on the moving water. The motley crowd, gay and full of life, moved to and fro in the warm night, fragrant with the scent of flowers, full of mysterious shadows.

The air was heavy with the spicy smell of tropical blossoms. Every now and again a light breeze would drift from the sea, bringing along the briny breath of the ocean. Human voices, dancing and singing, the sound of a guitar, the wailing of a violin, well-known melodies from every open door and window. . . . Igrunka hummed as he sipped his soda and pomegranate syrup:

"In distant, burning Argentina. . . ."

thinking, as he did so, of Kotik Ojoguin, of the steppe, and of Taniusha Loskutova.

Two mulatto girls passed in front of him, arm in arm, half walking, half dancing, showing their silk stockings and their lace-flounced petticoats.

"Hijo del Dios Blanco!—Son of the White God!"—exclaimed one of them, fastening her eyes on the blue eyes of the young man.

There is a universal language, the language of love. Igrunka was an expert at it.

A moment later the girls were sitting at his table sampling ices and drinking cocktails. They heard that he was a "Russo," that he spoke French and German, and they produced a friend of theirs, a Creole, who also spoke German.

The latter was prettier and bolder than the two mulatto girls. At midnight, Igrunka was dancing a tango among the tables with the Creole, attracting general attention by his tall figure, his fair hair and blue eyes. The public applauded and enthusiastic exclamations were heard:

"Hijo del Dios Blanco!"

Next morning Igrunka left for Buenos Ayres with a letter of introduction from the Creole to the proprietor of a Russian café, called "Ukraina."

## VIII.

A FORTNIGHT later, "the son of the white god" wrote to his brother Oleg, who was now at Gallipoli: ". . . I have plunged into South American life. I spent two days in Rio Janeiro, have visited Santos and Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, and am at present in Buenos Ayres, the Paris of the Argentine. My dear Oleg, the skyscrapers here and the crowds of people about are simply phenomenal. I lived for some time in the building of the Russian church, and now I work as a common peon twelve hours a day, washing dishes and glasses, floors and windows at the Russian café, "Ukraina." In the evening, I change my clothes and sit in the café, where I study Spanish and try to make myself acquainted with the customs of the Argentine."

The "son of the white god" washed dishes and floors for five months, until the day fortune smiled upon him.

The German Ambassador gave a ball. The Embassy was brilliantly lit up. A military band was playing. One could hear, in the street, the shuffling of feet, the conversation and laughter of the dancers.

Igrunka, in a well-brushed evening-suit and a pair of white gloves, tall and slender, stood in a corner

of the dancing hall. No one would have guessed that this smart young man was a dishwasher at the Café Ukraina. His hands were rough under his white gloves, and no manicure had been able to make his nails look clean and well polished. His old dinner jacket was shiny at the seams and elbows and his trousers were beginning to look baggy. No tips would ever be sufficient to help him buy any new clothes. Soon he would be unable to deceive anybody. Everyone would know what he was. He would not be mistaken for a young diplomat any longer and would receive no more invitations to balls at the Embassies.

The previous day, the Creole, Pepita, daughter of a rich cattle trader, after some passionate love-making, had suldenly jumped up, exclaiming:

"Show me your hands!"

"Why do you want me to show you my hands?" asked Igrunka, blushing.

"Show them to me. . . . There, I thought so! . . . Oh, I understand now why you have no pretty pajamas and why you refuse to hire a flat for our rendezvous! You are not a Russian Hussar at all. You are a longshoreman, a stone-breaker or a wood-cutter. You simply are a fraud, that's what you are! You have been deceiving me, when you spoke of your ancestors. You have horny hands and your fingers are rough!"

How hateful all this was. How would he ever be able to make Pepita understand that at the moment everything was possible, that a Russian captain in a Hussar regiment might wash up dishes in a café, and

a barman might have been in command of an army. She did not even know where to look for Russia on the map. She had fallen in love with the "Hijo del Dios Blanco," and she wanted him to have soft hands. Life was becoming difficult. He had been toiling twelve hours a day for five months, and he could see no opening. He wondered if he would have to spend all his youth in this way, seeing nothing of Buenos Ayres but the Café Ukraina and its clients.

This was not enough for the "son of the white god."

He did not enjoy the ball at the Embassy. He knew he would not be invited any more. Pepita was there, and she would go about telling everybody, with that tiresome shrill voice of hers, that the "Hijo del Dios Blanco" was a mule-driver, a shoeblack, a street-sweeper, a longshoreman.

"Teniente Kusskoff," said a soft pleasant voice beside him. He looked up and saw two men in evening-dress standing before him. One of them, the one who had spoken, was a young, blue-eyed German, Gerstenstein, serving in the army of Paraguay, whose acquaintance he had made some time before; his companion was a stout, grey-haired man, with a red, clean-shaven face, and large, prominent, kind, intelligent eyes.

"Das ist ein russischer offizier, er spricht sehr gut deutsch," said Gerstenstein to his companion, and, taking Igrunka by the elbow, he whispered to him: "Colonel Sheriffe, War Minister of Paraguay."

"Why is this young officer so sad?" asked Sheriffe in faultless German.

"Eh, Colonel! Why should I be gay? Everything is so sad."

"I understand. What regiment were you in?"

"In the Tchernobylsky Hussars."

"Did you go through a military school?"

"I went through the Cadet Corps and was for a year at the Cavalry School."

"Gut, sehr gut. I see that you have had a good education."

"What use is my education to me?"

"You must not be so pessimistic. There were two frogs, one was a pessimist, the other an optimist. These two frogs got into a cellar and, jumping about in the darkness, they fell into a big jar full of cream and began to drown. The pessimist exclaimed: 'I am done for!' He folded his little paws, swallowed too much cream and went to the bottom. The optimist said: 'I am going to fight before I give in,' and began to work with his paws. In the morning, the optimist, tired out, but looking very happy, was sitting on a lump of fresh butter!"

"I have been working with my paws for five months, but I do not feel any butter under me," said Igrunka.

"Wait a moment; do you like riding?"

"I should think I do, it is my joy."

"Are you fond of horses?"

"I love them."

"You wouldn't be afraid to find yourself in the wild

prairies, cut off from everything, with a company of brave soldiers, defending the frontiers from the Indians?"

"What is there to be afraid of? I should be delighted!"

"I can take you as junior officer in our cavalry. The pay is good and you will have a handsome uniform to wear. Moreover, the work will be familiar to you."

"I shall be most happy indeed!"

"Capital. I am returning to-morrow to Assuncion. Come and see me next week and we shall fix it up."

Sheriffe shook hands with Igrunka, bending his grey eyes upon the blue eyes of the young man, and said in a kindly voice:

"You remind me of my son who was killed at Verdun."

No one danced as gaily or as gracefully at the ball as did the "Hijo del Dios Blanco," and the calumnies spread by Pepita did not succeed in throwing a shadow over his success with the dark-skinned belles.

## IX.

The little town of Asuncion is built on a gentle slope on the banks of the Paraguay. The river, dotted with the black hulls of steamers and the white sails of yachts, languidly rolled its glittering waves, as though on fire under the rays of the tropical sun. The flags of the Argentine, Brazil and Uruguay flickered like gay butterflies from the mastheads. A warm, soft breeze rippled the water. Beyond the river an ocean of green stretched towards the horizon. That was the "chaco," where thorny cactuses and dwarf palm trees were interlaced with lianas—the impenetrable, mysterious South American forest.

In the main street, "Palmas," European goods were exposed in the windows: silks, velvets, furs, fans, precious stones and jewelry, cut-glass, pictures and engravings. Small tables, protected from the sun by wide awnings, stood in front of the cafés. One could hear the rustling of the daily papers. The blue smoke of cigars curled upwards in fantastical spirals. Negro waiters in white jackets with gold buttons hurried to and fro, carrying drinks and cakes.

Igrunka was seated at one of these little tables with a cup of coffee in front of him, waiting for his travelling-companion, Lieutenant Montés del Ocho. They

were to start together up the river Pilcomajo, on the destroyer "El Treumfo," for Fort General Delgado, on the frontier of the Argentine.

Igrunka was dressed in a khaki tunic, held in at the waist by a belt with a gold buckle, and blue "chasseur" trousers with a pink stripe. The scabbard of his sword glittered in the sun.

The evening before, at the Grenada theatre, the young Russian and Gerstenstein had gone up the wide Moorish staircase leading to the broad terrace above the streets which ran down to the port. The fiery amaryllis, the aloes in bloom and the cactuses with their fantastic shapes surrounding the platform seemed like weird monsters in the electric light.

The two young men had taken a little table in the centre of the platform, and Igrunka, who wore the dark blue uniform of a cuirassier, and held a German helmet with a star in his hand, boldly examined the ladies, feeling he was the centre of attention of the crowd. He was happy to be once more in uniform, but he tried not to dwell on the past. His heart smote him when he thought of Russia, the image of his father and mother rose before him, he longed for the limitless steppe, the broad highway, the fields glittering with hoar-frost, the sharp, invigorating air, smelling of wormwood and burnt straw, where the barking of dogs echoed so joyfully in the morning.

"A good soldier," said Gerstenstein, bending down to his ear, "finds his happiness where he takes up service. You and I, Teniente Kusskoff, are soldiers

by calling. Neither of us has a country of his own. I have sworn fidelity to Emperor William, and I cannot serve those who so easily gave up their army in order to save their skins. I am a militarist, Teniente Kusskoff, and so are you, and I am sure that we shall be able to make good soldiers of our cowboys."

The word "Teniente" pleased Igrunka. He had been lieutenant of the Hussars and the equivalent, "khorunjy," of the Cossacks; he had been promoted to the rank of captain in the Volunteer Army, but he had never really commanded or instructed his men. He would have to learn to throw the lasso, to shoot with a carbine, to handle the "navaja," the curved knife, which is the national weapon of the Paraguayans.

He would learn to do it! What a lot of things he would have to talk about and to show when he returned to Russia.

Talk about—to whom? Show? To whom would he show them? What would his meeting with his father be like? And his beloved mother? Was she alive? Oleg had said. . . . His brothers were wandering about the world. Maia was married to Bardij. Igrunka had met them one day, in Constantinople. They were buying diamonds from the Russian refugees, and were preparing to start for Nice, where they intended to purchase the villa of a ruined Russian princess.

What and whom would he find in Russia? Bol-

sheviks, rude, ill-bred, savage "comrades" and the ruin of Russian civilization. It was best not to think of it.

Handsome, dark officers of the Cuirassier Regiment of Paraguay were seated at a little table close to him. They had broad shoulders and thin waists, hawk-like profiles and large, dark eyes. They wore white tunics of German pattern, the uniform of the President's Guard.

"They live, they laugh, and I shall do the same: I shall live and laugh. This will be my country. Is it not beautiful?"

The narrow little streets, with their one-storied houses, surrounded with gardens, sloped downwards to the expanse of the river. The electric lamps glittered like shining pearls, enveloping the town in a filigree net of light. The stars of the southern hemisphere sparkled in the sky, and the Southern Cross shone with extraordinary splendour. He gazed at the graceful, exquisitely beautiful women, with their dark complexions and long, black eye-lashes, their white dresses with floating, bright-colored scarfs and their fans. He knew that this was the tip-top of Asuncion society. The men who accompanied them, rich tradesmen in black dinner-jackets and white trousers, or else officers in uniform, were smoking "pachitoses," chatting and laughing.

Gerstenstein went on speaking. He was glad to be able to speak German. A negro boy brought two tall crystal glasses filled with a pink, snowy substance.

"Do you know, Teniente Kusskoff," said his com-

panion, "that Fort Delgado is not an ordinary fort. It was built in 1917. Up to then, it was only a small farm, belonging to a Frenchman by the name of Gravières, who lived there with his young wife, his brother Louis and five workmen. Popas Indians worked as day-laborers on the farm, clearing up the chaco and receiving their pay in spirits and rum.

"These are peaceful Indians. One day, they warned Gravières that the Chamakokos, who were at war with the Popas and hated the white men, had left the chaco and were marching towards the farm. Gravières sent his brother in a motor-boat to Asuncion, and another messenger to the Argentine military post, Fontana. When Louis returned, two days later, all he found was seven mutilated bodies and a dead dog. The squadron of Paraguay cowboys sent out patrols everywhere. They reported that camp fires were to be seen in the chaco, not far from the frontier. The squadron dismounted and made their way into the forest. Monkeys were shrieking, green and blue parrots with red wings were flying about over the heads of the soldiers. They reached the dying fires and saw fifteen naked bodies stretched out in the clearing. They were the bodies of the Argentine soldiers sent out from Fontana. The Indians had cut their throats and killed an officer and a sergeant with a javelin.

"After this, the Government erected a fort and a block-house on the spot where the farm had stood. The fort is defended by thirty-five riflemen, with two machine-guns. You will be in command of them.

The Indians of the Chamakoko tribe have retired into the depths of the chaco and are no more to be seen, but the soldiers have orders to fire, without warning, upon anyone who comes near the fort at night."

Igrunka was thinking of all this as he sat in front of the best café in Asuncion, opposite the theatre where he had spent such a pleasant evening with Gerstenstein.

A small valise was lying under the little table at which he sat. He was about to start for Fort Delgado, where Gravières and his wife were buried. Perhaps there was some other farm in the neighborhood, where some beautiful young girl lived? A day might come, when the Indians would attack this farm and he, the brave Teniente Kusskoff, would save the young girl. He might end by marrying the Spanish maiden with the dark eyes.

He was lost in dreams.

## X.

The fall of 1919 was particularly hard for Lipotchka. Despite the intervention of Masha's commissar, the flat had been requisitioned and was full of unemployed lodgers who lived on the rations distributed by the state, and spent their days playing cards. The family had to be content with the kitchen and the little dining-room. The water-pipes had ceased to work and the smell in the flat was foul. Masha had declared that she could not live in this way, and openly spent the night at the commissar's rooms. Lipotchka sighed and moaned, but was inwardly glad of it: there was one person less to feed and less people in the kitchen.

They were obliged to remove one of the window-panes and to replace it with cardboard in order to accommodate a stove-pipe. Benedict Benedictovitch had brought his wife a book in a handsome binding, saying:

"Do you recognise this book? It was given as a prize to your brother Andrew at school. It is a Russian translation of Schiller's works. May be you would like to keep this relic of your past family life."

"We have no time to think of relics. Besides, where else can we obtain any cardboard?"

"Well, this will do splendidly. Schiller translated

by Gerbel. Who on earth should want it under the Workmen and Peasants' Government? They would only make cigarettes of it. Schiller, . . . Schiller, . . . we all learnt by heart 'The Maid of Orleans' in the old times."

"Those were good times," said Lipotchka with a sigh. "Mother was alive."

"Yes," said Benedict Benedictovitch, "the accursed times of Czarism were good times. One could buy a kalatsch for three kopecks at Filipoff's in the Troitzkaya."

"What is this Peasants' and Workmen's Government after all," said Lipotchka. "I can't make head or tail of it. What can a workman or a peasant understand about governing a nation?"

"It's all bluff, Olympiada Michailovna," said her husband. "There isn't one workman or peasant among them. They all belong to the "Intelligentzia," or else they are Jews. Take Ilyitch for example. Lenin is neither a workman nor a peasant; he is a nobleman by birth. He fled from Russia when he was quite a young man; he doesn't know or understand her. He is a living pamphlet. Trotzky is a Jew . . . an emigrant, like Lenin. And Zinovieff too. They are all the same. They used to reproach the former aristocracy for knowing nothing about the people and taking no interest in them. Well, and what about this new aristocracy, which has never so much as seen the Russian people—all these Letts and Poles and Hungarians?"

"Yet they manage to govern us. . . ."

"Yes, but do they? We are afraid of saying a word. We whisper when we talk. I trust you and you trust me. But I am afraid to speak in the presence of my own daughter, Masha!"

"I trust Masha," said Lipotchka. "She is a good girl, but a very unhappy one."

"Unhappy? She lives in warmth and comfort, she spends her evenings at the theatre."

"That is not happiness," said Lipotchka, with a sigh, and then was silent, lost in thought. Her beautiful eyes, which were the only good features in her pale, sickly, puffy face, were sad. They made Benedict Benedictovitch think of her mother's eyes? Varvara Sergueievna had been a beauty. Lipotchka had inherited her eyes, but she had never been pretty, and hunger had not improved her looks.

"I am worried about our children," she said, after a few moments' silence. "I often think of my childhood. We, too, rebelled against our parents. But it wasn't the same. Masha lives with the commissar. Heavens! If this had happened to me or to my cousin Lisa, father would have turned us out of the house, and mother would have cried her eyes out. We were clean-minded girls, pure and simple—while they. . . . Dika! Dika! Does happiness really consist in wallowing in sin and dirt like swine, and ignoring the existence of the soul? The soul exists and God exists!"

Benedict Benedictovitch did not answer. He stood

frowning and rolling his cigarette of home-made tobacco.

"And Lena? I am afraid she is just as bad. She is not yet sixteen, and she spends all her evenings in the dance-halls. She says it makes her forget that she is hungry. And I don't really know anything about her! She tells me nothing. My darling boy, Fedia . . . he was the best and the most open-hearted of them, and he was killed by the Social-Revolutionaries!"

"Have patience, mother," said her husband. "The civil war will come to an end and everything will come right. There will be bread and meat for everybody, the rations will be doubled and the persecutions will cease.

"Bread, Dika, and meat! . . . Also sugar . . . and tea! . . . Well, and what about our souls? Shall we go on praying to their infernal placards and posters, and bow to Karl Marx? It is better to die of hunger, but to save our souls."

## XI.

It was about six in the evening. Benedict Benedictovitch had just come home from his office. His bell had been answered by one of the lodgers. All the family were absent. Lipotchka had left the house early in the morning, with a sack and a little sleigh, taking Andriusha with her, to hunt for something to eat. They had been living for three days on rotten vobla and hot water.

Benedict Benedictovitch entered the dining-room and sat down on the sofa. He could hardly distinguish the familiar objects—the oak dresser—the dining-table. "What do we want with a table," he thought. "It is a long time since we have had dinner."

"I have never been rich," he thought, "but I never used to suffer from hunger. We never dreamt then that potatoes were such a valuable vegetable. Baskets full of them stood outside the green-grocer's, and no one ever stole any as he passed by. They were not sold by the pound, but by the bushel or ton. The cook used to buy two measures for five copecks. And the copeck pieces were thick and solid with the Imperial eagle on one side and the inscription: 'Five copecks' on the other. Where have they all gone to?"

His thoughts were wandering. Hunger was caus-

ing new sensations. He was sleepy, but could not sleep. His stomach clamored for food. "You too are an unemployed," thought Benedict Benedictovitch; "you are like a factory without raw material. Lipa is as thin as a skeleton, yet her face is all swollen. It is a bad sign. It comes from hunger. We did not know hunger in old times. There were sometimes droughts and famine in the region of the Volga. But the Red Cross and the 'Zemstvos' organised canteens. If one part of the population suffered from famine, the other came to the rescue. As for the postal employees, they always had enough. They would enter a 'traktir' and order a 'bitok' or a 'Pojarsky cutlet' and a mug of amber-colored beer full of froth. All this has disappeared."

He could see the full moon shining through the curtainless window. Lipotchka had sold both blind and curtain, saying: "We don't want them; let the passers-by see us going to and fro if they like, I don't care." Silvery rays fell upon the old dining-table, once clean and well polished, now stained and greasy.

"If there were only a crust of dry bread on the table," thought Benedict Benedictovitch, "an old, dry crust of bread, like those the cook used to throw out with the egg-shells and cucumber peelings. We did not know our luck at that time."

Suddenly the smell of newly baked bread began to come from the oak dresser. He thought he could see it: a great round loaf of rye bread, crusty and tender within.

"I am dreaming," he said to himself; "where could this bread come from?"

But the smell was so strong that Benedict Benedictovitch rose from the sofa and walked up to the dresser, reeling as he went. He was trembling in every limb. His breath came in gasps. He opened the dresser and saw a great round loaf lying on the lower shelf. A delicious smell filled the room. He opened a drawer—took a knife. His hands were shaking. He stretched out his hand—and seemed to wake from a nightmare. The shelf was empty, there was nothing but dust upon it. He suddenly felt a violent headache, went back to the sofa and lay down.

"This is the hallucination of hunger," he thought. "This is how it begins. It appears that in the Crimea, the doctors are studying these phenomena. They have a vast field of observation. The whole of Russia is suffering from hunger."

Fiery balls seemed to roll about in his breast. His eyes were starting out of their sockets. The moonlight irritated him. He could not concentrate his thoughts upon anything. He looked at the table and saw a plate standing out in the silvery ray of the moon. It contained a big mutton-chop covered with gravy and surrounded with potatoes. It seemed incredible, but it could not be an hallucination. The smell of the chop was delicious. He clearly saw the cutlet. "I shall have to share it with Lipotchka, Andriusha and Lena," he thought. "Masha has enough to eat. But who knows, after all? Maybe I ought to leave her a bit

of it as well? No, there would not be enough for everybody. I will leave the potatoes for the children and share the chop with Lipotchka. I will let her have the tender part and keep the bone for myself. But she doesn't know anything about it. I could just as well eat the whole of it. I could eat the chop and the potatoes and then go to sleep."

He rose and went up to the table, bending over the plate in order to enjoy the smell of this delicious dish. Once more he got a shock and had the sensation of waking from a bad dream. The table was bare. Specks of dust were glittering in the moonlight.

This was unbearable.

He threw himself down on the sofa, burying his face in the cushions, and closed his eyes. His whole body was shaken with tearless sobs.

He heard the bell ring in the hall and knew that it was Lipotchka and that the lodger would not open the door to her, knowing that he was at home. But he could not get up. He seemed to be stricken down with sudden faintness.

"Hallucination and then death from hunger!" he thought.

The bell rang for the third time. Benedict Benedictovitch rose slowly and painfully from the couch and staggered to the door.

"Well?" he asked as he opened the door.

"I have been lucky, Dika! I have sold my muff and bought some flour, a few turnips and some carrot-tea. We are going to have dinner!"

"That's good. But I am not able to help you, Lipa. I haven't got the strength to do it. I shall lie down. It is stupid of me. Forgive me."

"Lie down, Dika. I am very tired, but I shall manage alone. I have been very lucky! We shall all have a meal. Has Andrew returned?"

Benedict Benedictovitch did not answer. He was lying down on the sofa, his face buried in his hands. He felt horribly ashamed of himself!

"I wanted to eat the chop—all alone; and she—tired out as she is—only thinks of us. She is a saint!"

## XII.

One day, at the beginning of December, Benedict Benedictovitch did not return from his office. A postman brought Lipotchka a note from him, begging her to send him some bedclothes, a plate, a cup and saucer. "I have been arrested, and I am going to be sent to the Boutirky prison. I think it must be a misunderstanding of some sort," he wrote to her.

Lipotchka hurried to the prison. She spent twenty-four hours going from one office to another, from one commissar to another, trying to obtain permission for an interview with her husband. She was roughly treated and laughed at, but she got the permission.

"There is no need to worry, comrade," said one of the prison officials. "Lissenko is neither a high dignitary, nor a social-revolutionary. Some calumny must have been spread about him. The Tcheka will examine his case and he will be set free. There is no harm in spending a few days in prison. We have had cabinet-ministers here, generals, A.D.C.'s of the Emperor, political leaders, the ministers, Kutler and Makaroff, General Tatitshtcheff, Samarin, High Prosecutor of the Holy Synod. Your husband is a simple post-office official, and there is no accusation against him. Be calm, comrade."

Benedict Benedictovitch himself was equally calm.

"Thank you for bringing me a blanket, Lipotchka," he said. "It is cold sleeping here. Fortunately a priest gave me his coat to cover myself with at night."

"Why did they arrest you, Dika?"

"I can't understand it. It must have been some silly blunder. They arrested the whole of our section. They cross-examined us all and let everybody go except me. To all my questions as to the reason of my imprisonment, there was but one answer: 'You will know it later on.' And here I am waiting. It seems that people have to wait here for months."

A period of new worries and fresh anxieties for Lipotchka.

She had to find money, beg the authorities for rations, sell the rest of her miserable belongings in order to feed Benedict Benedictovitch, bring him white bread, a little tea and tobacco. She had to bribe the keepers in order to see her husband.

Benedict Benedictovitch did not lose courage, although three weeks had already elapsed without his having been examined again.

"What can they do to me, my dear Lipotchka," he said to his wife. "I am not guilty of anything. Besides, I have seen the inscription 'of proletarian origin' on my papers, and this is equivalent to that of 'Count' or 'Prince' under the old regime. I am in prison. But isn't the whole of Russia at present in prison? I shall be set free with the help of God!"

Lipotchka worked like a slave. She went to bed in the evening in the cold kitchen, after having eaten

a small portion of the daily ration, the larger part of which she gave to Andriusha and her husband, but she could not sleep, tortured as she was by the pangs of hunger. She looked like a skeleton. But she did not think of herself. The spirit of sacrifice had got hold of her. She spent her mornings rummaging in her boxes, looking for something to sell, and then hurried to the "Sukarevka" market, elbowing her way through the crowd, bargaining and selling her rags and buying something for Dika. In the night, she dreamed of millions. In her dreams she bought a roast goose and took it to her husband. Half awake, she thought: "I am going to buy a pound of fresh caviar for Dika, and I'll bring him a kalatsch from Filipoff's. He likes aniseed gin." Then she opened her eyes and realised that all this was impossible.

She had grown to worship Benedict Benedictovitch. She forgot all her troubles thinking of him. She felt that she had never loved him as she did now. He was so unhappy, so gentle and resigned—a saint. She would willingly have gone to martyrdom for his sake.

On the eve of Epiphany, she was on her way to the Boutirky prison. Someone had told her than an amnesty was going to be proclaimed on the 9th of January, and that Benedict Benedictovitch was sure to be liberated. She had been lucky enough to sell, the day before, for a considerable sum, a pair of small turquoise earrings, which her father had given her on her fifteenth birthday, and which she had treasured until then in memory of him. She had bought a big

loaf of white bread, a pound of sugar, some tea and tobacco, and she kept thinking how pleased Dika would be to have them, and to hear that he would soon be free. Her heart was full of joy. Pink clouds were floating in the blue sky. The sun was shining and the frost was not hard. The soft, porous snow penetrated the torn and worn soles of her boots; her stockings were full of it, but all this was a trifle. Lipotchka was used to it.

The old soldier of the Red Army who was on watch, in his torn overcoat, examined attentively the little slip of paper bearing the name of Lissenko, shaking his head with a troubled air. He left the room and returned shortly after, saying curtly:

"There is no prisoner of this name here!"

"Why," said Lipotchka, "I saw him last week."

"Will you step into the office?"

Lipotchka followed him along corridors and up the staircase, carrying her parcels. This delay troubled her a little, but her heart was still beating joyfully.

"It must be a mistake," she said to herself. "This is probably a new man. Maybe they have transferred Dika to a new cell."

In the room where she was introduced, she was received by a young man in a leather waistcoat. The room was over-heated and there was a strong smell of fresh paint from the stove. The "vasistas," a small opening at the top of one of the windows, was open. A frosty mist streamed into the room and melted in the heat.

"What can I do for you, comrade?" asked the young man amiably.

"I want to have an interview with my husband, Benedict Benedictovitch Lissenko, and I am told that he is not here."

"I don't wonder they tell you that."

"Why?"

The young man took up a pile of papers from the table and handed her one of them. At the bottom of the paper was the inscription: "Archip Lissenko, condemned to death for participating in a counter-revolutionary plot."

Lipotchka looked at the young man with vacant eyes. "Excuse me," she said, "I don't understand."

"This means that your husband has been shot."

"My husband's name is Benedict, not Archip," said Lipotchka, trembling in every limb.

"Jurinsky," cried out the young man to someone in the next room, "who was taken out to be shot yesterday?"

"Benedict Lissenko, employed at the Post Office," came the reply from the next room.

The young man glanced at the paper with an expression of bewilderment; then he said in a most affable tone:

"Pardon, comrade, there has been a misunderstanding. Benedict Lissenko, employed at the Post Office, was shot yesterday by mistake in place of Archip Lissenko, officer of Denikin's army. A most regrettable misunderstanding, indeed!"

## XIII.

Lipotchka remained silent for a few moments. She was stunned. She could not make herself believe that her Dika, so tenderly loved, was dead. She looked, without blinking, at the fresh, clean-shaven face of the young man. At last her eyes shone, she took a few steps forward, laid her parcels down on the table and, leaning forward, bent down to the tchekist.

"You say it is a mistake, a misunderstanding?" she said in a loud voice, emphasizing each syllable. "How can one kill a man by mistake? Do you know whom you have killed? You have killed a man who has never done any harm to anybody in his life. A man who had come from the people and had worked all his life for the people, deciphering addresses, sending letters and parcels to their destination, anxious that an illiterate, badly spelt peasant's letter should not get lost. He never meddled with politics. He worked conscientiously, without troubling about the number of hours or his salary. His son perished during the revolt of the Social-Revolutionaries. He sacrificed his son to your cause, and you have killed him!"

"Madam," said the young man, rising from his seat, "I have already told you that it was a misunderstanding. A mistake is always possible. We deplore it ourselves."

"No," said Lipotchka, shaking all over, "a mistake of this kind is impossible. You will not make him rise from the dead, you will not give him back to me! A mistake of this kind would have been impossible under the Imperial Government. Those who were found guilty were executed at that time, but innocent people were not wantonly killed."

"I will beg you not to make any comparisons, comrade," cried the young man.

"Let me tell you," continued Lipotchka, raising her voice, "that you ought never to have got to power if you don't know how to govern. You are hated and despised by everybody, and your Lenin is an arch-scoundrel."

"How dare you?" stammered the young man, "do you realise what is in store for you? You are insulting the Workmen and Peasants' Government."

"Guilty of high treason, am I? Ha-Ha! Well, you can kill me. I am only a wretched woman, persecuted and half starved! It is all you are fit for!"

"Get out of here while you are still alive! Leave this room at once!"

"I am speaking the truth. You are all scoundrels, and Lenin is the worst of you all."

"Take her away, comrades!" shrieked the young man in the leather waistcoat, giving Lipotchka a blow on the chest with his fist.

Lipotchka staggered and almost fell. The old soldier went up to her and took her by the elbow.

"Come," he said, "it's no use talking to them. They won't listen to you."

He led her away into the corridor. The young man ran out after them.

"Comrades!" he shouted. Several soldiers of the Special Detachment of the Tcheka hurried up to him, dragging their rifles after them. "Drive this madwoman away, drive her out of the gates. She has insulted the Workmen and Peasants' Government. She has insulted you!"

Five soldiers of the Red Army surrounded Lipotchka. They took her parcels from her before she could realise it. Thoroughly worn out and dazed, she walked mechanically down the long corridor, pushed along by the men.

"A counter-revolutionary, are you?" hissed a tall, flaxen-haired soldier into her ear. He had a puffy face, small, yellow, squinting eyes, with white eyelashes, and no teeth, like an old man. He spoke with a lisp. "Look at her, comrades! She is half alive, and seeks to foment rebellion and spread proclamations!"

His neighbor, a short, stout little soldier, with a round freckled face jostled Lipotchka along with the butt of his rifle. She staggered at each blow and was on the point of fainting.

The heavy gate creaked on its hinges. The guards of the Tcheka ran out into the yard to see what was going to happen. One of the women prisoners was howling down the corridor:

"Comrades! they are beating a woman! They are once more using violence in prison! Comrades! you must protest in the name of the law."

The vivid light of the sun, which made the white snow sparkle and scintillate, dazzled Lipotchka. She saw the blue sky . . . tried to take a long breath, and fell in a dead faint.

The women continued howling:

"Tyrants! Assassins! When will you leave off drinking our blood! Comrades, we are taken by force!"

And a deep voice roared in tones full of authority, covering the voices of the women:

"Will you be silent! I'll put you in a dark cell! I'll forbid all outings for a week!"

The soldiers and the guards surrounded Lipotchka, who lay stretched out on the snow.

"Is she dead, comrade?"

'No, she will come to; she is moving."

"What shall we do with her?" said the little round-faced soldier. "Shall we take her to the hospital?"

"To the hospital, what for?" said the tall, fair-haired one. "There are no hospitals for counter-revolutionaries!"

"She is going to give a lot of trouble," said the old guard gloomily.

"Besides, the doctors wouldn't accept her," added another. "She would have to be fed. She is half dead."

"Shall I finish her off?" said the little soldier. "It wouldn't take long."

There was no answer. A heavy silence reigned in the courtyard. The men kept shifting from one foot to the other. Lipotchka lay quite still, with her feet tucked under her and an arm under her head.

"Shall I give her a blow?" again said the little soldier, looking about with an indifferent air.

No one answered, but a few sighs were heard in the crowd.

The soldier lifted his rifle and gave Lipotchka a blow on the head. She moved convulsively, lifted her hands to her head and began to moan.

"Why torment her?" said the tall soldier with the white lashes. "Give her a finishing blow."

The soldier gave Lipotchka a short knock on the head, as though he were hitting a croquet ball. His victim sat up in the snow with a loud scream.

"She has as many lives as a cat," said the tall soldier. "Try once more. If she remains alive you will have to answer for her."

"I thought it was only for a joke," said the little man, shyly.

"Strike, you cur!" cried someone behind him.

The soldier seized his rifle once more and gave Lipotchka a blow on the face. Blood streamed from her nose, she fell face downward, made a few convulsive movements and then remained quite still.

"Woropanoff," said somebody, with an air of authority, "call some of the criminal prisoners and

make them carry this woman into the mortuary. And you, comrades, cover this pool of blood with snow. The political prisoners might see it when they go out for their walk."

"Let them see it and understand that these are not the times of Czarism," said the fair-haired soldier. "This is the reign of the Soviets."

## XIV.

Fort General Delgado stood on the right bank of the Pilcomajo. The left bank belongs to Argentina and the right to Paraguay. A path led from the little port, where El Treumfo was berthed, to the summit of a green hillock, where a long, one-storied building with a thatched roof, the barracks of the fort, stood at the back of a clearing in the forest. Somewhat lower was a small house which served as headquarters and office to the military post. A hoof-shaped trench with a high parapet, covered with planks and earth, had been dug on the bank of the river.

A red, blue and white flag, with a brown five-pointed star in a circle of tea-leaves, the flag of Paraguay, flew above the barracks. The single wire of a telegraph line ran down from the trunk of a palm-tree to the headquarters cabin and connected this outpost of civilisation with the outer world. Beyond it stretched the chaco with interspersed "esteros" or "belesas de muerto," beauties of death, meadows covered with radiant flowers.

These meadows were impassable swamps; the terror of the Paraguayan forests, into the depths of which no European had ever ventured to penetrate. They were inhabited by Indian tribes who had lived there in full security for centuries.

A swarthy giant in a shirt with an open collar, in long ample trousers and a gaucho's wide brimmed hat, was waiting for the arrival of the boat.

Shielding his eyes from the sun with his hand, he examined the travellers. Perceiving Montes del Ocho, he began to run in the direction of the little house. An officer, wearing a white cork helmet, stepped down from the terrace and came forward with a smile of welcome.

The engine stopped. The gangway was lowered. Montes del Ocho stepped ashore and shook hands with the officer.

"Lieutenant Kusskoff," he said, introducing Igrunka.

"Lieutenant Morinago, commandant of the post," answered the latter, introducing himself. "Let us go, gentlemen, the *mate* is waiting for us."

A rustic terrace ran all round the house. Twisted palm trunks and branches of Brazil-wood trees formed the pillars which supported the wooden roof. Vines and climbing roses, in full bloom, ran around the terrace protecting it from the sun.

A bare wooden table and three wicker chairs awaited the travellers. The military hacienda was poorly furnished, but to a passionate hunter like Igrunka, it was full of indescribable charm. The creaking, uneven, wooden boards of the floor were covered with the skins of wild deer, antelopes and gazelles. Dark grey, shot with silver, orange with white oval spots, brown with black spots, they formed a slippery carpet. An acrid

smell of fresh fur emanated from them. The skin of a jaguar was stretched on the wall between the windows. The fur, with its queer black rings on a reddish background, and the long tail of the animal were thick and fluffy. A smart Mauser, with a nickel-plated lock and an American walnut stock, hung by the door ready for business. Three small pear-shaped cups, two of which were made of horn and the third of some dark-colored wood, were set on the table, and a silver tube lay beside each. These cups contained *mate*, the tea of the gauchos, bitter and unsavory, but refreshing and invigorating. Igrunka's cup smelt strongly of sandal-wood, his silver tube was tarnished by use, but it was all so strange, so original, and there were only forests and pampas all round, and no other Europeans in a hundred miles.

Igrunka enjoyed his *mate*, using his silver tube and trying to imitate the ways of his new colleagues.

"Do you hunt?" he asked Morinago.

"It is impossible not to here," answered the latter.

"How beautiful these forests must be!" said Igrunka.

"Yes, but as fatal as they are beautiful. They are worth millions, but it is impossible to turn them to account. There are whole forests of india-rubber trees, but in order to reach them, you have to cleave your way through with a broad-axe, standing up to your waist in the liquid mud of the swamps. Since the abolition of slavery, European civilisation has made no progress in South America."

"This sounds like a paradox," said Igrunka.

Morinago did not understand what he meant. He was speaking seriously as artless people do, when they talk business, and are far from the idea of bandying words.

"Cheap human material is needed," he went on, "men who are ready to die for a dollar . . . in order to clear the ground in this region, obtain india-rubber and plant gardens or plough the land. Over there in Argentina," Morinago nodded in the direction of the river, "they are founding great hopes on the Russians, who have nowhere to go and are deprived of all civic rights, like slaves."

"That is only temporary," said Igrunka, with an angry flush. "Bolshevism is soon going to be shaken off, and we shall once more be what we were."

A gaucho in a shirt with an open collar brought some antelope meat fried in cocoa-nut butter, some tin plates, a bottle of rum and glasses.

Morinago lighted a small cigar, carved the meat, and, having filled the glasses, said, sending a whiff of blue smoke up to the ceiling:

"I had here for three months a Russian officer, Teniente Statoslao Golubintzeff."

"Why," exclaimed Igrunka, "that must have been my friend and schoolfellow, Golubintzeff, a Cossack of the Don. We were at the Cavalry School together. Where is he now?"

"I don't quite know. I think he has a job as overseer at a tanin factory somewhere. He was dreaming,

like you do, of going back to Russia. Not so soon, however. He told me a lot about Russian Bolshevism. Exactly the same thing happened a hundred years ago in Argentina."

"Were there Bolsheviks in Argentina?" exclaimed Igrunka.

"Rather," said Morinago, sipping his rum.

"Tell Lieutenant Kusskoff the story of Juan Rosas, the red dictator of Argentina," said Montes del Ocho.

"My grandfather fought against the 'Colorados' in his youth. We lost our estates during the revolution, and my grandfather fled to Paraguay," said Morinago.

"You are of Argentine origin?" enquired Igrunka.

"We are all Spanish," answered Morinago, filling Igrunka's glass with clear transparent rum, of the rich color of a pomegranate. "Have you had enough to eat, my young assistant?"

"Quite enough, thank you. I am waiting for your story. Bolsheviks in Argentina! Who would have imagined that? 'In distant, burning Argentina. . . .'"

"What is this you are singing?"

"It is a tango that was the rage in Russia two years ago. Argentina! The land of millionaires, and—Bolshevism!"

"It only proves that socialism and capitalism are two brothers who are eternally at war with each other," said Morinago. "Juan is going to bring us ices," he added; "we will add some rum to them and then I will tell you about the terrible times of our red dictator, this Caligula of the 19th century."

The gaucho brought in a dish with a block of ice which sparkled like snow and placed it upon the table. Morinago filled the glasses with the soft porous substance, added some rum to it, crossed his legs and unbuttoned his tunic.

"I advise you to do the same, gentlemen," he said; "my story will take some time to tell."

He lighted his cigar.

## XV.

"It was in 1829, if my memory does not fail me," he said, and fell silent, gazing pensively at the horizon, where the last rays of the sun were fading. One could hear distinctly, in the silence of the evening, the chatter of the monkeys and the persistent cries of parrots.

There was not a flutter in the air, and the waves of the Pilcomajo were gently splashing against the thick grass and reeds growing on the shore. The bell rang out on the destroyer "El Treumfo."

"Yes, it was in 1829, according to what my grandfather told me. There was, at that time, a weak and inefficient government in Argentina. Mysticism and free-masonry were the fashion and, instead of ruling with a firm hand, the authorities delivered speeches, talking and endeavoring to 'convince and persuade,'—as your Kerensky put it—fearing to arrest and put into prison those who were guilty of breeding trouble. Those were the days of ideal aspirations, of dreams of a new and happy life for everybody.

"It was then that a certain Juan Rosas made his appearance in Argentina. He had spent his youth in prison and had afterwards lived abroad, appearing from time to time in his country, as the

chief of a group of people who were a cross between brigands and anarchists. It was difficult to draw the line between his communism and anarchy and simple robbery. He would probably have spent his life wandering about in the pampas seeking shelter with the Indians, plundering farms and holding up mail-coaches, if a revolution had not broken out in Argentina. Revolutions and new governments in the South American Republics," said Morinago, with a smile, "are as frequent with us as spring storms in the mountains. We have given up learning the names of the presidents at school—they are too numerous. Rosas took advantage of the disturbances in Buenos Ayres, to seize power with the help of his gang of followers, and proclaimed himself 'dictator by the grace of the revolution'."

"Just like Lenin," remarked Igrunka.

"Exactly. Rosas declared himself chief of the 'Colorados,' the creators of a new, free Argentina, and called himself 'guardian of the revolutionary law, defender of the toilers and herald of liberty for all the trodden-down and afflicted.' The scoundrel could talk glibly enough, and all the vagabonds and highwaymen hastened to join his ranks. The educated classes of Argentina and the remnants of the old government retreated into the pampas, refusing to recognise the authority of Rosas. Their party received the name of 'Blancos,' the Whites."

"Just as it is with us," once more said Igrunka.

"There are only the 'Petliurists,' the 'Makhnoists' and the 'Greens' wanting."

"The reign of Rosas was a long nightmare for Argentina, full of blood and tears. Continual revolts took place against this sanguinary government, under the direction of the 'Blancos,' who perished in masses during their repression, or else emigrated in thousands abroad, while those who were unable to leave the country were obliged to submit to the dictator and take up service with him. Rosas was surrounded with negro battalions, ex-convicts, with the scum of the cities and half savage 'gauchos,' half brigands, half illiterate herdsmen."

"One would think," said Igrunka, "that you were speaking of Russian Bolshevism and of Lenin, who also is surrounded with Chinese and Lett regiments, with ex-criminals, half savage peasants—with all the scum of the cities and villages."

"Yes, and if I am telling you all this, it is just because all that Teniente Statoslao told me seemed to be the repetition of my grandfather's stories about those times in Argentina. All who had boots and shoes on and a roof over their heads, were 'bourgeois' and left to the tender mercies of Rosas and his retinue. He had given the order to exterminate the 'Blancos' with fire and sword. The independent press had ceased to exist. The official dailies published by Rosas himself had alone the right to come out. Revolutionary tribunals were instituted everywhere to try 'the enemies of the people and revolution,' not according

to any law, but as their 'revolutionary conscience' would prompt them. The judges were former convicts, mulattoes and negroes.

"Yes, Teniente Kusskoff, history repeats itself. Those who were found guilty, were put to death. The executioners were armed with blunt, dented knives, in order to protract the tortures of the victims and 'make the blancos feel' that they were being killed! There were different modes of execution in the different provinces of Argentina. It depended on the revolutionary taste and inventive powers of the authorities. Thus, for instance, the commissary of the Province of Sant Jagè, Ibarra, a herdsman by profession, used to bend the condemned in two, so that their heads would touch their heels, and tie them up with a rope in this position. They were then wrapped in a fresh cow-hide and exposed to the sun. As the hide dried and shrank in the sun, it would slowly break the prisoner in two. Red flags floated everywhere in Argentina. Wearing the national colors of Argentina, white and blue, was a capital offence. Rosas abolished religion, wedlock and family life, ordering the propagation of materialistic principles, free from clerical prejudices and superstitions. The wives and children of the blancos were forced to work for the soldiers, cleaning lavatories, sweeping streets and barracks."

"One might think," said Igrunka, "that Lenin was inspired by Rosas."

"Maybe," said Morinago dreamily, "they both drew their inspiration from the same source."

"What source?" inquired Igrunka with astonishment.

Morinago sat quite still, looking into the distance, mechanically stirring his ice and rum with his silver tube. The dark pall of the sky settled gently down upon the vast expanse of the forest.

The gaucho brought a candle with a crystal globe and placed it upon the table. Everything around was plunged into darkness and only the crescent of the moon shone like silver in its upward course above the forest.

"You have asked me if I was a hunter," said Morinago at last. "I have become one, because I hate mankind. Ever since my childhood, my grandfather's tales have left a seal of disillusion on my soul. How could reasonable beings with the knowledge of these terrible facts be so blind as to let them happen again? Your revolution was made by your 'intelligentzia,' wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well then, how could they do it? For I do not doubt for a minute they were aware of what had taken place in Argentina a hundred years earlier? There must be some mighty and baleful hand leading mankind, and mankind blindly obeys! I have been living for over three years at Fort Delgado, and I am glad to be far from man!"

"How did it all end?" asked Igrunka.

"You see," said Morinago, "Rosas wrote that the flame of the revolution in Argentina would spread

to all the other countries of the world and would liberate them from the yoke of the 'masters,' that the task of Argentina was to be at the head of this movement. The people believed him. In reality, however, it was all very different. The European powers declared a blockade against the Republic of Argentina and the neighboring states broke off all dealings with her. Industry and commerce were completely ruined. Paper money had lost all its value. All that was requisitioned in kind from the people, was barely sufficient for keeping the government and the Red army. The population of this country—the most fertile in the world—was dying out for want of food—while the national press still extolled the bloody dictator, as 'the red reformer of the world,' the 'guardian of revolutionary conscience.' This thing went on for twenty years. In 1852 a rebellion broke out in the Red army. Several Red regiments united under the leadership of Rosas's lieutenant, General Jose Urquis. The people joined the rebels. Young men flocked into the ranks of the 'blancos.' My grandfather was one of them. Finally, the troops of Rosas were defeated. Rosas and his ministers sailed for England, where he lived until his death, many years later, in fabulous wealth and luxury on his loot, which he had transferred to English banks in good time. When the army of General Urquis entered Buenos Ayres the liberators were smothered with flowers. Women and children kissed the stirrups of the horsemen and the hands of the foot-soldiers."

"But why," exclaimed Igrunka, who had risen from his seat in great exciement, "why did not General Urquis demand of England the extradition of Rosas and the delivery of his plundered riches? Why did he not have him judged by a real popular tribunal?"

"Why?" said Morinago. "Because the blancos are Christians and the colorados, atheists, and what is possible to the latter is impossible to the former."

"As to me," said Igrunka in a trembling voice, "I would have burnt them all alive! I would have made each of them suffer all they had made the blancos suffer."

"Even if your brothers—your father had been in their ranks?" said Morinago in a whisper.

Igrunka gave an involuntary start.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Because my grandfather's father, my great grandfather, was a member of Rosas's government," answered Morinago, bowing his head.

"How awful," said Igrunka. "What horrible things happen on this earth! And God sees it all and lets it happen!"

"Don't forget," said Montes del Ocho, whose face looked grim in the candle light, "that besides God, there is the Devil, and that all his efforts tend to destroy."

## XVI.

THERE followed one another in procession the days of a strange, reckless, and yet monotonous, life. In the wide plain beyond the forest the gauchos taught Igrunka to capture wild mustangs with a lasso, to throw, saddle and ride them, keeping his seat for all their desperate bucking. He realised with pleasure that he was more daring and skilful than the gauchos themselves, and could break the horses quicker than they did. He learnt to use the "navaja," the curved gaucho knife, on a man of straw, and of an evening he would stand up, with bent knees and body bowed forward, against one or another of the soldiers of the post. The knives would glisten in their hands. The men of the post would crowd around and Lieutenant Morinago, legs wide apart and his hands thrust into his breeches' pockets, would watch the fight. The eyes of the soldier glistened like burning coals. Both Igrunka and he, touching each other lightly with their left hands, moved about in leaps and bounds, each intently watching for an opening in his opponent's guard, to drive home his knife.

"Touché!" exclaimed the sergeant, springing back.

"The shoulder doesn't count," said Morinago.

"But I am hit in the chest, sir," said the sergeant,

pointing to a tiny drop of blood trickling from a slight scratch on his skin.

Once more they were on guard. The glowing eyes of the soldier watched every movement of the young officer, and the Spaniard, son of the pampas of Paraguay, and Igrunka, pupil of the Cavalry School of St. Petersburg, were like two kittens gracefully playing with each other.

"Touché!" said Igrunka, lowering his knife. "Your victory, sergeant!"

"You'll have your revenge to-morrow, sir," answered the sergeant with a smile.

All the inhabitants of the post liked and admired Igrunka, as he had been loved and admired in Asuncion, where he had left so many broken hearts. Women and men alike loved him for his recklessness and daring in love and under fire. Igrunka was handsome, he was young and strong. He had nothing to lose but his life and about life and its value he often used to sing to his companions at the post, to the accompaniment of his guitar, an old song of the Tchernobylsky Hussars. He would sing it in Russian and translate it into Spanish, and approvingly his new friends would say:

"Teniente Kusskou has followed the right path of honor."

In one of the clearings of the chaco, under a spreading eucalyptus tree, stood a small straw hut with a wide, sloping roof. No. 27 was traced in white on

a small board, nailed to the trunk of a palm tree which served as a telegraph post. This was the Post Office. There Igrunka often found waiting for him scented pink envelopes with the oblong Paraguayan stamp, red in a frame of blue, bearing the postmark of Asuncion. They usually contained invitations to rendezvous. With leave of absence duly obtained from Morinago, he would disappear for a fortnight. Igrunka's fair, curly hair, his blue eyes and tall, graceful figure had conquered the hearts of the creoles. His caressing ways, and the songs he sang to the accompaniment of his guitar, had earned him the reputation of a Don Juan, and carried him along from pleasure to pleasure. One day it would be a trip on the picturesque Pilcomajo, another time an hour full of bliss and apprehension of discovery in a cosy, scented bedroom with shuttered windows, or a night with a creole in a little room of a hacienda, and then, once more, life at the post, the narrow camp-bed, the murmur of the forest, the cries of the parrots and the shrieks of the monkeys.

It was still night when Morinago made preparations for getting up from his bed, a simple wooden trestle with a straw mattress on a netting of sinews. He struck a match and got his pipe going. Clearing his throat he lit a candle—it was five o'clock

"Kusskou! Kusskou!" he called out. "Oh-hé! Oh-hé!"

Igrunka stretched himself and pulled his blanket over his head. Then he suddenly remembered that

they were to hunt jaguars that day and with a jerk he sat up in his bed, every vestige of drowsiness gone at once.

"Coming, Morinago," he exclaimed.

Morinago opened the door and let in the light. Igrunka began to dress in his gaucho's clothes. It was still quite dark when they went on the verandah. The black mass of the silent forest loomed against the star-lit sky and a thick layer of white fog hung above the river. One could hardly distinguish the silhouettes of the men and horses in the courtyard. Here and there the red glow of a cigarette flared up and died down again. The air was laden with the strange and aromatic smell of plants and herbs and the tropical river, strong and heavy, as though blended with the scent of incense and vanilla. The silence which reigned all around in nature was so complete that the voices of the men near the barracks sounded irreverent.

One of the men kept shouting out insistently:

"Juan! Eh eh! Juan eh!" To which at last a voice answered from the depth of the stables:

"Eh eh! What do you want with Juan?"

"Where have you put the lieutenant's saddle-bags?"

"Where have I put them? Never set my eyes on them!"

"Carpincho!"

"Carpincho yourself! Can't you see, you fat-head, that they are strapped to his saddle?"

Except that they were talking in Spanish, Igrunka thought that these men in the dark might as well have

been his Cossacks or Hussars getting ready before daybreak for a day's march, so familiar sounded their voices and the things they had to say.

They set forth in utter darkness and entered the forest, following the narrow paths where the wet branches brushed their faces as they rode. The little horses trotted briskly along. Morinago, in a wide-brimmed soft felt hat, rode in front, his legs thrust forward gauchowise. Igrunka followed, the gauchos and five soldiers brought up the rear.

An hour later they emerged from the forest. A wide stretch of pampas, covered with dry, yellow grass, opened out in front of them. It was just before sunrise, the hour when, in the tropics, day, unannounced, follows on the heels of night. Darkness and the dread of night still reigned in the forest they had left behind, but on the plains a powerful breath seemed to chase away the dusk and mist. Eastward the horizon flamed up, red as though on fire. The conflagration grew apace, and presently the whole of the eastern half of the vault of heaven was ablaze with pink and overspread with radiating rays of gold. The sun seemed to hesitate for a moment, reconnoitring the plain, as it were, from its hiding place, and then suddenly burst forth, luminous, victorious and powerful, lighting up the limitless expanse. A herd of antelope were grazing by the side of the road. Their leader looked up in alarm, he took a few steps forward, as though to examine the horsemen, and then scampered away, bouncing over the plain. The herd followed, and one

could only see their red backs and white flanks, like the wings of large snow-birds, flapping over the trodden yellow grass.

The gauchos had tracked down tne jaguar on the previous day and had followed its trail at dawn when the animal had gone to drink in the Rio Verde. They had seen it disappear in an isolated thicket of trees and brushwood, where it dozed in the daytime.

The hunters surrounded the thicket. Igrunka had hobbled his horse and left it to graze. It began to crop the grass, sighing contentedly and whisking the flies away with its long tail. Small, bright-colored birds were flying about, alighting on the long, dry stems of the pampas grass. A large black toucan, frightened at the approach of the hunters, took its flight, awkwardly beating its wings, like a turkey, and fell heavily back into the grass. The gauchos were calling out to one another. Igrunka stood on the very rim of a little wooded island, where the grass was trodden down by the brute's comings and goings. The whole of the island was no more than twenty steps long. The "cat's nest" was there, according to the gauchos. The beast would soon make its appearance, if it had not already made its escape.

Igrunka looked about deliberately with the experienced eye of a hunter. Suddenly he saw an enormous yellow cat break forth from the thicket of brushwood and throw itself with a long jump into the open. It disappeared for a moment, crouching in the tall grass, and then jumped again. While the brute was still

suspended in the air, Igrunka brought his rifle into line with its shoulder-blade. He fired, and presently caught sight of the black tip of the dead animal's tail, which was lying stretched out in the grass. Almost at the same instant, there was a second report. Morinago was firing at another jaguar.

In the afternoon, in the fresh shade of the trees and bushes the huntsmen lunched on "tchourasco," meat roasted on a spit, and drank wine. The skins of the jaguars were hanging on the branches of a giant eucalyptus tree, and Igrunka several times went up to them, caressing the long fluffy tails. After lunch, they were photographed in a group. Igrunka, who was slightly drunk, was aiming his gun at the camera. Morinago was sitting beside him. The gauchos, in their white shirts, long plaited trousers and wide-brimmed straw panamas, were grouped around them. They jested and laughed at the photographer, in a rough, healthy, good-humored way. Afterwards, they slept a deep, dreamless sleep, breathing the fresh air of the plain. When the heat had abated, they rode home through the prairies, guiding themselves by the sun. Night was falling when they penetrated into the forest surrounding Fort Delgado, laughing and talking aloud, in order to attract the attention of the sentinels.

## XVII.

THE skins of the jaguars had been dried, scraped and so perfectly dressed that they would have done credit to any professional furrier. Igrunka had spread out his skin on the table of the verandah and feasted his eyes on it. He kept stroking it, running his fingers through the soft fur, stepping backwards to admire the extraordinary combination of dark circles, rectangles and spots on a background of orange yellow.

"A lovely skin," said Igrunka to himself, "a beauty! I had too much rum and wine that day," he went on, as some episodes of their hunting trip recurred to his mind, "and I was drunk . . . drunk and happy. It was a rattling good day, and it is a glorious thing to be alive, I am sure."

To whom should he give this first trophy of his big game hunting in South America? He could not keep it for himself. Should he send it to Anita, the young and beautiful banker's wife? He thought of the passionate kisses she had smothered him with last Sunday. He had called her: "his incomparable, his only one," when he was all impatience to get away to the hacienda del Venados, where Donna Louisa, the purple-hued, was waiting for him. Well, to whom should he give it? To Anita, or Donna Louisa, or to

Pepita, the little flower-girl of the "Café d'Espagne," who was pining away for him—the poor little thing! She had even wanted to come to live with him at Fort Delgado. That would really have been the limit! They were all alike, all equally loving and lovable—even Donna Maria, the shipowner's widow, a woman of a somewhat mature beauty, with her thirty-five years. He loved to stay with her, in her beautiful house in the best street of the town, full of comfort, with occasional escapades to the suburbs of the town, where Anita lived, or to the hacienda del Venados to meet the passionate Louisa.

In the absence of Donna Maria he would sometimes receive Pepita in the house. He had all but been taken unawares by Anita's husband one day. He had only just had time to grab his clothes and boots and jump down from the second floor into a flower-bed. Another time some gauchos had been watching for him, in order to kill him, when he was leaving Donna Louisa's, but she had given him the best horse in her stable, and he had escaped his pursuers. Once Donna Maria had surprised him with Pepita in her bedroom. Oh! what a scene had followed! . . . there had been tears and poison and daggers. And then, everything had been forgotten in their passionate embraces. How beautiful Donna Maria's eyes had been, glistening with tears.

"You are a wonder, Igrunka! . . . You are holding high indeed the Russian flag in this island of songs and castanets and unbridled passion!"

No, the skin cannot be given to anyone but the truly beloved one.

"The truly beloved one?"

Yes, the woman one loves and thinks of always, for whom one waits and prays.

It was a long time since he had prayed. What would his dear mother have said if she had known that he had almost forgotten the words of "Our Father."

But he had not forgotten God.

He had had a letter the day before—it was from Maia.

Igrunka took the crumpled letter from his pocket, ". . . I have left my husband and am suing him for a divorce. I cannot live with a man who does not love Russia."

His eyes were dim. He could hardly read Maia's delicate hand-writing.

". . . The farther away I am from Russia, the more I love her. At present I live in the little town of Nish in Serbia. You may not believe it, but I have become a dressmaker, and am a celebrity in this line. After Mrs. M., who is very kind to me and helps me on with my work, I am the best needlewoman in Nish. My dresses and my embroideries are all the fashion. I live in a little house in a garden full of flowers. How susceptible to beauty we Russians are! We did not realize it before. And we see it only now. How beautiful Russia was! I often think of you, Igrunka. How nice you looked in your hussar's cap when you

were leaving Spasskoie on Caracalla. I shall never forget that moment. The Easter bells were ringing in the village church—their voices were mounting joyously to heaven—and I, who loved you—I had to let you go . . . into the unknown!"

"I have seen your brother Oleg at Nish. He serves with the Cossacks of the Guards. His regiment was stationed here for a time. How beautiful they were, physically and morally, this handful of young men who managed to keep their uniforms and swords all through the trials they had undergone. They appeared to us like true knights of the sword, guardians of the national honor. All of us fell in love with them. They sang hymns and the National Anthem. Russia is not a vain word to them. They have been suffering for her sake, they are suffering now, and they will suffer again, but they will never be disloyal to her."

Igrunka put the letter back into his pocket. Everything around him, as if by magic, had changed its appearance. The jaguar skin on the ill-made deal table had suddenly lost all its beauty. It had become a mere colorless rag of a skin, dull and faded. The bare network of the branches and stems of the vine and rose-tree of the verandah wearied him to death.

It was winter. The trees and shrubs had shed their leaves but it was as hot as in summer, and it rained frequently. The days were long and monotonous.

Igrunka went to his room, a cubicle four paces long and three across, with the plaster of the walls crumbled off in some places, a camp bed, a table, a wicker chair,

one window and beyond the latter the dark virgin forest.

He could hear the shrieking of the monkeys, the cries of the parrots. Beyond the forest were the pampas, the limitless plain, and far away, on the horizon, the grove marked "Post Office No. 27." All this had been attractive and interesting a year ago, when he had arrived here with Montés del Ocho. But now that he had outdone everybody else in the place in shooting, hunting and fencing, now that the charm of novelty had worn off, it left him cold and indifferent.

They said of him: "El Teniente Kusskou ha sabide seguir el recto camino del honor!"

No, it was not he, it was Svietik, Oleg, all those of whom Maia spoke in her letter, "who had followed the right path of honor!"

He called God to witness how ardently he too wished to suffer as they did—to give his life for his country.

How empty life seemed away from one's country! This jaguar skin seemed to have been destined by fate to open up new vistas before his eyes. The skin must be given to the beloved one. But she was not here, she was *there*. Anita, Donna Louisa, Pepita, Donna Maria, none of them was the beloved one,—the beloved one was over there, far away. Maia!

Igrunka left his room, went down the bamboo stairs of the verandah and entered the forest, following without aim the trail that had been made by wild animals along the bank of the river. He went on unattended, unarmed, without his hat, lost in thought.

## XVIII.

Thus he had been wandering for hours. The sultry day had come to an end, and a warm, moonlit night had taken its place. The dead silence of winter reigned where the forest ended and the open plain lay silvered in the light of the moon.

The news Maia had given him about Oleg and his Cossacks had filled his soul with an unspeakable feeling of homesickness. He longed to be in his own country again, with his hussars; there was no happiness like home.

To him it was no more the pampas of South America with its dry grass, bathed in silvery light, that opened out before him; it was the vast expanse of the steppe of his motherland. The frost has smitten the winter crops; with the rime on their bright stems, they look as though sprinkled with sugar. Ice glitters in the furrows of the fallow land, and golden are the wide stretches of stubble-fields. The smell of smoke and earth and frost blend in the bracing air; it is the smell of Russia. The sound of church bells comes floating over the steppe; it is Michaelmas-day. Oh, how far away all that is now. The manor house is decorated, for it is the feast day of the village church. All have gone, only he and Maia are there, and Léka is supposed to act as chaperon. And yet, there is

laughter in her eyes when she sees Maia put her arms round his neck and awkwardly kiss him.

Years have passed. There have been thousands of other kisses. Many a woman's hand has pressed his hand, and yet he has not forgotten the pressure of those fluttering girlish fingers; he has not forgotten the kiss of those soft swelling lips timidly clinging to his lips.

Neither can he forget the sound of the church-bells. There is no other country in the world where church-bells ring as they do in Russia. Russia alone has grasped the stirring music in those billows of sound when they come floating over the steppe, ever swelling and growing in volume. Nowhere else are bells rung like that.

Russia! He loves every bit of it, even the beggars in the churchyards, for all their ugliness and tatters, with their pitiful voices and shrivelled, dirty hands; for they are a characteristic part of every Russian church. And they have not their counterpart in any other country in the world. He has seen many beggars in the course of his wanderings about the world: some were worse, some better than the Russian beggars. Some were blind and they had dogs with a red cross on their collars to guide them, others sat on the pavement and played the violin or concertina, others again lingered near railway stations or went about begging in restaurants, but the haunt of beggars in Russia is in front of God's house. That is why they are called "uboguië"—those who are close to God.

With his mind's eye Igrunka saw the great cathedrals, the gold of the image lamps and chandeliers, the mosaic of the walls, the precious stones of the settings, the faces of the saints. It had taken centuries to create this atmosphere of holiness. Let knaves and Jews fox-trot there if they like, let those archknaves, the Red priests who have sold their souls to the Red Devil, revile Christ and preach their sermons from behind card tables in the church itself; their evil-smelling blasphemies will never cast out the sweet scent of incense, the atmosphere of prayer and worship of a thousand years.

It was a long time since he had been in church, since he had prayed. Now, under the dome of the trees, with the vast expanse of the pampas lying before him, he felt as though he were in church once more, and lifting up his hands in prayer, he cried out:

"Give us back our country! Save Russia!"

As though in a trance, mechanically retracing his way back to the fort, he walked on, blind to his surroundings.

The forest seemed full of witchcraft in the moonlight. It had cast its spell on him, and at every step he took he expected it to fly open and reveal to his eyes his beloved steppe, his hussars, his brother Oleg with his Cossacks.

"That's where the 'recto camino del honor' lies. How thin their ranks have become. How few are left of those who love and understand Russia, their mother country! All around, nothing but indifference,

selfishness, egotism. Yes, there were not many left, and, in the course of time, even those few will become still less in number, but they will restore Russia in the end, for their hearts are strong!"

He had been wrong when he thought he could live and be happy without Russia. The people here were good to him and kind-hearted, but they were strangers. His own people were over there! It cannot be that all are Bolsheviks,—that all do not believe in God, that all scoff at religion and the Christian faith. The whole of the hundred millions? Never! There will be a Czar again, and the people of Russia will cross themselves and say: "Thank God! We are saved at last!"

The forest opened. The white walls of the buildings of the post looked in the moonlight like the white-washed mud-cottages of a farm in Little Russia. The blockhouse resembled in outline a broken hay-stack.

Fort General Delgado!

The sentry in the wide-brimmed hat and long trousers walked his post holding his carbine under his arm. The bluish reflection of the moonlight on the barrel flashed up and died out again as the soldier turned.

"He has orders to fire without challenge at anyone coming out of the forest at night. Naturally he is going to fire at me too, and he will shoot me dead, me, Igrunka Kusskoff, the universal favorite of the post, but otherwise a man who will not be missed much, for he is an alien. If I am not killed to-night,

I might be to-morrow by hostile Indians, doing battle for Paraguay. Igrunka Kusskoff is a soldier, he is not going to flinch, he will know how to die a soldier's death!—

"For Paraguay!

"And meanwhile Russia is a prisoner in chains—Russia is being trodden underfoot—Russia is in need of soldiers!

"And Igrunka Kusskoff throws away time and energy on promiscuous love adventures when Russia expects him to found a family.

"Over there is Maia, like himself, way-worn and weary, looking in vain for happiness, without a real home of her own, making dresses in an out-of-the-world place like Nish and languishing for him.

"El recto camino del honor is there and not here!"

It would be enough to set a twig moving, to come out of the forest, and instantly a shot would ring out bringing death. Well, he is not afraid of death. His fellow-officers and his brother have chosen the thorny path and, working like galley-slaves, are holding sacred the traditions of their regiment and keeping watch over their mother-country, while he wears a smart uniform with a clanking sabre, tipples rum and dances idiotic dances.

His temples were throbbing and his face was hot for all the freshness of the air. About fifteen steps distant from him was the sentry. He had stopped and was looking into the forest towards the spot where

Igrunka stood. In the moonlight Igrunka recognised him.

"It is Juan Torres, a fine soldier. Not very intelligent, but otherwise quite reliable and a good shot. And that is the man who will kill me!

"Absurd! Nearly all my life is yet in front of me, and many other things. Besides, we are not free to do as we like, we belong to Russia, and Russia needs us!

"Juan! O-hé! Hé-hé! Juan!" he shouted, and his voice echoed in the forest.

"Eh-éh-éh!" Juan sang out in the high falsetto tone characteristic of Turks, Spaniards and people of southern countries in general when they raise their voices in shouting. He was ready to fire! "Who the hell is calling me? Eh-éh-éh!"

"It's me, el teniente Kusskoff!"

"Eh-éh, sir! You did give me a start! I might have fired. What a mess it would have been! Pass on, please."

Their voices echoed in the forest. The dry grass rustled under his feet. The stairs creaked as he went up to the verandah. The jaguar's skin was still lying on the table, gleaming in the moonlight. A beautiful skin. Igrunka knows to whom he is going to give it.

In his little room, by the light of a candle, Igrunka counted his pesetas, savings out of his pay. It was not much, and it would be still less when it was changed into dollars.

His heart was beating fast. He felt a little giddy

as he realised the danger he had just escaped. Glorious plans stirred in his head. Hang the money! A steward's job will help along, or if the worse comes to the worst a man could always sign on as a stoker. Anything would do if only it could help him to get over there, where the others were, his friends, his brother, to work with them towards rescuing Russia, the reconstitution of law and order, to serve his country and his Emperor and defend his faith.

This done, he would found a family of his own, a strong Russian family, as theirs had been before it had been shattered by the revolution.

Both he and Maia had walked the thorny path of suffering, but they had learnt to understand life, and they could forgive each other everything for the sake of a family of their own and their country.

When he lay down on his hard cot, Igrunka inwardly repeated to himself with satisfaction:

"El teniente Igor Kusskoff ha sabido seguir el recto camino del honor."

# PART FOUR

## I.

Fedor Michailovitch had reported at the headquarters of the White Army at Gatchina in order to explain the motives that had made him take up service with the Reds. He had been told to apply to a special commission which, however, as he found out, existed only on paper. In the end he joined, as a simple lieutenant, an infantry regiment, the colonel of which was an old schoolfellow of his.

General Yudenitch's offensive had fizzled out. The Whites had retreated into Esthonia, although the pressure exercised by the Red Army did not seem to justify this retreat. After the assault of the Red troops on Narva and the default of Esthonia, which had hastened to sign an armistice with Trotzky, the White Army had been disarmed and disbanded under the control of the English. The officers and men had been allowed to stay in Esthonia and work in the forests. Those who wished to leave for abroad were free to do so, but it was nearly impossible to obtain a visa, and the five English pounds sterling that were allowed for the journey were quite insufficient to cover expenses.

Fedor Michailovitch had received a letter from his sister-in-law Aglaia, the widow of his brother Hippo-

lytus, informing him of Natasha's death. Under the weight of this news and the defeat of the Whites he had broken down completely. He had wanted to join a co-operative gang of workmen who intended to hire themselves out for work in the sawmills of Esthonia, but the despair that reigned in his soul, and a creeping sickness, a kind of latent typhoid fever which undermined his strength, although he hardly suspected its existence, had crippled his will-power. He had neglected to make the necessary arrangements in time and, until March, had been hanging about in Narva working in the hospitals, sweeping wards, scrubbing floors and digging graves for the dead. When this work came to an end, he had set out for Reval. Aimlessly wandering about the streets of Reval, he had chanced to meet some old friends of his, the Dekanoffs, who were preparing to embark for Germany. They persuaded him, not without difficulty, to go with them.

The first to arrive in the mornings at the Russian Home-Handicrafts Workshop of Frau Saenger (Berlin-Hallensee, Friedrichsufer Strasse) was always Fedor Michailovitch. Winter and summer alike he wore the same short English military overcoat, and underneath it a grey suit he had bought with money advanced to him by the Dekanoffs. With heavy steps he painfully climbed the narrow, dark stairs up

to the fourth floor and rang the bell at the door of Frau Adams's flat.

Frau Adams, an officer's widow, had sublet three rooms of the four of her flat to Emma Ivanovna Saenger, a refugee from the Baltic Provinces, who had organised the Russian Home-Handicrafts Workshop.

The working staff consisted of seven people. There were three ladies—Verotchka Dekanoff, a pretty young girl, rather plump, and with dark hair; Nina Likhatchoff, also young, but fair and slim; and a stiff, middle-aged spinster, Mathilda Ivanovna Parnickel, ex-teacher in a Russian girls' school. They decorated boxes, caskets and cigarette-cases with oil and water-colors in the "Russian" style. Colonel Dekonsky, ex-officer of the Imperial Guards and, later on, officer of the Northwestern Volunteer Army, had to cut out of thin brass and silver sheets, double-eagles, St. Georges, Russian peasants' huts, sailing boats and conventionalised likenesses of birds and animals, while Captain Losskutoff of the same army, who had been a sergeant in the Imperial Army and was a professional craftsman from Kostroma, carved them into boxes and cigarette-cases. Captain Shpak polished and varnished all these articles, and Fedor Michailovitch did the gluing, hinging and fixing of locks and latches. It also was his duty, which he shared with Shpak, to put the workshop to rights after the day's work was done, to tend the stoves in winter and prepare the varnishing materials.

These seven people worked on co-operative lines.

The girls and Mathilda Ivanovna Parnickel, Dekonsky and Losskutoff, represented the artistic part of the business and were entitled to 70% of the benefits of the sale, while Fedor Michailovitch and Shpak shared the remaining 30%. What they earned was barely sufficient to assure a miserable existence in the suburbs of Berlin. Fedor Michailovitch had hired an attic belonging to a shoemaker, in a dark courtyard of the "Gartenhaus," and lived on potatoes and pea-soup. They worked from nine to one and from three until eight at night, but often remained at the workshop until eleven and sometimes even until past midnight.

Like a flock of birds, women of the upper classes who had never had to work for their living, officers and officials who had been used to receiving fixed salaries on fixed dates,—these Russian refugees had come and settled down in this foreign land, in this vast, cold city. They were obliged to make the most of whatever little arts and talents they might have exercised in the past—painting, embroidery and so on —and club together and open workshops. Emma Ivanovna had a small capital and some relations in Berlin, she loved Russia and Russian people. She advanced the necessary funds for hiring a shop and buying materials, others gave what they could, and the little flat began to hum with feverish activity. It soon became evident that Shpak was in love with Verotchka, and Dekonsky accompanied Nina Likhatchoff every evening to her boarding house in the Kurfuersten

Strasse. He had a wife in Russia, but had not heard from her since 1917.

On Saturday nights Fedor Michailovitch used to go to the church of the Russian Embassy, 7, Unter den Linden. At first he went there also on Sundays, but it was too painful and he had to give it up. For on Sundays this exquisite little chapel, once the personal property of Alexander III, was always thronged with people who would also fill the little yard outside, which rang with their voices. Everybody seemed to know everything worth knowing about everybody else. It was a sort of club to them: they would stand about in groups, smoking, chatting, arguing, shouting.

Inside, in the church proper, everybody seemed to have his or her own place. One knew beforehand where to look for the stately, frock-coated gentleman with the splendid head and the lion's mane of black hair shot with grey, or for the stoutish and important looking young man with the small, black moustache, or the spare figure of the old gentleman who, with his long, grey moustache, looked the very picture of an old-fashioned Polish nobleman. In the centre of the church was the acknowledged place of a tall and portly brunette who kneeled during the greatest part of the time mass was being said, and who was known for her firm belief that Czar Nicholas II was alive, or, if dead, would arise as Christ had arisen.

Next to her would stand a lady with hennaed hair and rouged lips, all bedecked with brilliants and pearls. She never failed in conversation to appeal to all and

everybody to go back to Russia, proclaiming that for Russians, cleaning out lavatories in Russia was better than vegetating in foreign countries. But somehow she did not seem to be in a hurry to go back herself. With their backs to the candle-counter, stood a tall gentleman in a rusty coat and his son, a young man who rolled his *r*s and was a poet, artist and musician of no mean talent. Just in front of the Dekanoffs, whose place was close to the window, stood a stately and imperious looking dowager, a millionaire, who dabbled in charity and was known for her political at homes. At the entrance of the narrow passage flanking the church proper, one could always be sure to see the representative of General Wrangel with his wife and two pale and distinguished looking daughters.

Fedor Michailovitch still managed somehow, in this atmosphere of pretence and fashionable gentility, to abstract himself and seek forgetfulness in prayer. But, when church was over and he threaded his way through the crowd in the passage and yard, he could not but notice how people shrank from him and a whisper ran through the crowd:

"This man has been serving with the Bolsheviks!"

With his head bowed, endeavoring not to look at anybody, he hurriedly crossed the yard, and only when he had reached the Brandenburger Tor and entered the Tiergarten, dared to breathe freely once more. He did not hear the sound of Russian voices. He felt easier.

And this was Fedor Michailovitch, who was so full of love for Russia and her people!

On Saturday nights it was better. There were not so many people. For the greatest part the congregation consisted of ladies who had passed middle age. On the other hand, the Saturday service did not lift up his heart, it did not inspire him with that feeling of pious beatitude he had always had when he heard vespers said at church in Russia. Instead of the Russian choir and the good-looking fair lady who sang the solo-passages on Sundays, on Saturday nights there was a choir of five Germans: two men—one tall and thin, the other one, a tiny sort of man with red hair,—and three ladies with masses of false hair bunched up in a knot on the nape of their necks. They sang by the music they held in their hands, mispronouncing the words, the meaning of which they did not understand. It was not a real choir,—it was only an Ersatz-choir. And the good-looking tall priest, too, with his clipped hair, trimmed beard and pince-nez, appealed to him more as an opera-singer than a clergyman, and the hymn he sang at the end of vespers held too much worldly passion for a song of praise to the Holy Virgin. It sounded more like an aria of earthly love.

After vespers, the old soldier went away feeling as though he had not really been in church, but in a theatre, as if he had not been praying, but sinning. In this large city, with all its Ersatz-coffee, Ersatz-

cream, Ersatz-butter, the Russian church was but an Ersatz-church, the priest was an usurper—an Ersatz-priest, and praying at church brought Fedor Michailovitch no relief.

## II.

One winter evening the Dekanoffs and Shpak took Fedor Michailovitch with them to the Circus Busch. Among the attractions there were eleven trained elephants which went through the usual tricks, there were clowns boxing each other's ears, turning somersaults and holding hoops for circus riders to jump through, and there was also a troupe of negroes from Dahomey who played on instruments made of gourds, sang their savage songs, danced and jumped to the accompaniment of shouting and shrieking; in short, the usual turns of a circus program. Verotchka laughed heartily at the antics of the clowns and the exclamations of the crowd, and Fedor Michailovitch, who sat next to her, seeing how thoroughly she enjoyed it all, also began to forget his gnawing pain.

Then, a shabby pink carpet was spread by the attendants on the saw-dust, and twenty-five young men came into the arena marching smartly in military formation. They wore imitation Cossack caps of rabbit skin, long coats that were evidently meant for Russian tcherkesskas, and wide trousers tucked into top-boots.

There was no need to look at the program. Fedor Michailovitch recognised them at a glance. They were

Russian officers and cadets. Nowhere else but at a Russian military school could they have acquired that happy medium between restraint and ease in their carriage, so different from the straitlaced precision characteristic of Prussian military men, and the too easy and cavalier nonchalance of the English and the French.

It seemed to Fedor Michailovitch that he knew them all and could call them by their names. That man there was Startzeff, and the one next to him was Boysman, and further on was Kuponsky, their sergeant-major. And wasn't that tall young man there he himself, Ensign Kusskoff? Only, their faces had never looked so haggard and so pale. Starvation had never stared with such hollow eyes from the faces of the cadets of His Majesty's Company.

The young men ranged themselves in a semi-circle in the manner of regimental singers, and one of them stepped forward, stood at ease, and, clasping his hands behind his back, began to sing in a velvety baritone voice the ballad of Stenka Razin, the robber chieftain of the Volga.

Something seemed to give way in Fedor Michailovitch's breast. He hurriedly got up from his seat and, wrapping himself into the folds of his threadbare English overcoat, made his way through the audience towards the exit. Dekanoff also got up and followed.

Pushing aside the folds of the heavy portière, Fedor Michailovitch left the circus and walked rapidly towards the canal, lying in darkness. A snow-storm

was brewing. Drifts of heavy, moist snow clung to the curbs and to the walls of the houses. The street-lamps were far apart, and their light shone dimly in the murky, snow-laden atmosphere through which, across the Spree, could be divined the heavy arcades of the National Gallery.

"You don't feel well?" asked Dekanoff, coming up with Fedor Michailovitch.

"I cannot stand it,—I tell you, Nikolai Nikolaevitch, I absolutely cannot stand it any longer! Russian officers, Russian cadets,—the same who for over three years have been fighting for their country, now starving, dressed up as buffoons, catering for a crowd in a circus along with trick elephants and savages from Dahomey!"

"It won't be so forever," murmured Dekanoff.

"Over three years of the most terrible of wars. . . . Millions of deaths . . . ghastly wounds . . . sufferings. . . . And after that again over three years of war for Russia's honor, for her traditional flag, for . . . this!"

Fedor Michailovitch stopped short—then went on again.

"I wonder, Nikolai Nikolaevitch, whether you realize how much I love them. They are mine—my own. Individually they may be strangers to me, but for all that I do know them. They might be my own Svietik, my Igrunka, my Oleg. They are the flesh and blood of those who, on the Bzura, at the word of command rose like one man, and charged, and were

killed, or had their legs cut off in hospitals without letting a moan escape their lips. They are those who would have won through for the sake of Russia and would have sung here in Berlin the very same songs they are singing now, only not at a circus, but in Unter den Linden, and not in clownish toggery bought for a hundred marks, but in their regimentals, as conquerors."

They reëntered the circus. Verotchka was looking with fascinated and shining eyes at the arena where two of the Russians were dancing to the accompaniment of a popular song.

The five thousand Germans who thronged the enormous space of the circus were roaring with enthusiasm.

"Mother," said Verotchka, pressing Ekaterina Petrovna's hand, "the Russians have conquered!"

"So they have," murmured Fedor Michailovitch, "but not where they ought to."

That night Fedor Michailovitch could not sleep a wink. The singing he had heard at the circus had awakened memories of the past which he could not banish.

Next morning he could scarcely walk, it was only with the utmost difficulty he reached the workshop. Once there, he did not get on with his work.

Shpak had been watching him.

"General," he said at last, "you can't go on like that. You ought to consult a doctor. Get a permit from the Red Cross, and their doctor will examine

you without charge; he is a good doctor, a Russian from Moscow, and quite a decent fellow."

"I know, I must ask a doctor, I am only afraid, Evgeni Pavlovitch, we are not supposed to be ailing."

"Don't you worry, General, have a good rest, I'll look after your work—we'll manage all right."

## III.

In January, 1918, when the guerilla leader Tchernetzoff, with his detachment of schoolboys and military cadets from Novotcherkassk, was at grips with the Red Ataman Goluboff near Kamenskaia, a young man of eighteen joined them, coming from the north. He was dressed in a rough peasant's overcoat, top-boots and a lambskin cap. When he took off his overcoat in the peasant's hut which served as headquarters to Tchernetzoff, it appeared that he wore the uniform of a military cadet, holding the rank of lance-corporal. According to his papers, which dated from the former regime, his name was Oleg Kusskoff, a pupil of the 1st Cadet Corps of Petrograd. His smart appearance, adroitness and clear and precise answers, bore witness to his military education.

The cadets of the Don took to him at once. He received a rifle, a Cossack uniform, a complete military equipment, and was admitted into the glorious family of Tchernetzoff's partisans.

After Tchernetzoff's death his detachment fought its way back to Novotcherkassk. Some of the young men returned to their homes and scattered, but others remained with the Cadet Corps. Oleg Kusskoff was one of their number. When Ataman Popoff left Novotcherkassk on the 12th of February, Kusskoff

had become everybody's favorite, and nobody gave a thought to his not being a real Cossack. He was a quiet youth and could turn his hand to anything. He played the piano and other instruments, he had a fine voice and sang well; he was religious and ably assisted the priest officiating in church. He was made Cossack by adoption and when, after the liberation of Novotcherkassk, a permanent army was being formed on the Don, he was enlisted in one of the cavalry regiments and sent to camp. With his solid military education it was natural that Oleg Kusskoff became the zealous assistant of the officers and sergeants.

"Kusskoff, show Miackotin how to clean his rifle."

"Kusskoff, explain the mechanism of a machine-gun to the Cossacks."

The young Cossacks drilled barefooted on the rich black soil of the steppe. The supply of boots could not keep pace with the growth of the new army. They drilled in the shade of enormous white acacias,—the whole steppe was fragrant with the smell of their tender blossoms. They slept on bare boards, in barracks which were surrounded with lilac trees in full bloom. A burning sun would rise above the pink, burnt-out steppe, and send down his scorching rays all day long. Even in the shade of the avenues and groves of the camp the air was hot and close. Thick, black clouds of dust would rise and remain hanging in the air all day long above the fields where the men were taught to ride. They rode bareback, in rough home-made breeches.

They were taught in haste. All around ruthless war was raging. To the north, and east, and south, the fathers and brothers of these men were fighting for freedom, for the deliverance of the country of the Cossacks from the Bolsheviks. It was an heroic struggle for the right to live. The spirit of the camp was excellent, the men were full of cheer, and there were no infringements of discipline. There were no class distinctions; officers and men lived alike, and the ideal of a military brotherhood of Christ seemed to have been achieved.

When off duty the officers and Kusskoff would busy themselves with putting to rights the camp church which had been desecrated by the Bolsheviks, and painting ikons. There were vespers and mass on Saturdays, Sundays and feast-days. Oleg sang in the choir and assisted the priest. After church the military band used to play, the chorus of the regiment would sing until late at night, and there would be a continuous coming and going of grandfathers, mothers and wives of the Cossacks from the neighboring villages and farms. There were also grass-widows, wives of the Cossacks who were fighting at the front, who would come to see friends, and one could see young couples walking about in the twilight, their arms round each other's shoulders, and hear the sound of happy laughter and kisses.

Many a young woman would glance with admiration at the handsome young man who looked so smart and had a face as delicate and as pure as that of a

maiden, but Kusskoff was indifferent to their overtures. He never refused to join in the games and dancing, he willingly sang and played on the balalaika and accordion, but he shrank from any kind of transitory intimacy. The Cossacks esteemed him all the more for this attitude.

In the autumn the regiment was quartered at Rostoff. The Cossacks lived in barracks. They were well dressed and fully equipped, the horses were well fed and well groomed and the men took a pride in their regiment.

Then, in the spring of 1919, an ominous crackling ran through the whole of the Don Cossack territory. Treachery was rampant on all the fronts, the Bolsheviks broke through everywhere and were gaining rapidly. The brigade in which Oleg served and which had been nicknamed "First Aid Brigade," was being rushed from front to front. Wherever danger threatened, the eaglets of the Don would come to the rescue. The regiments seemed to melt. Mothers, with dark, sunburnt faces grown thin from hunger, hard work and tears, came to fetch their dead on the field of battle, and carried them away to be buried in their native villages, destroyed and ruined by the civil war. The windows in the peasants' huts were broken; there were no cattle; only the crosses in the churchyards shot up in evergrowing numbers, like mushrooms after a warm summer rain. The wounded, hardly on their feet again, hastened back to their regiments. Their country was lost, their homes were gone, they did not

know whether their parents, those who were dear to them, were still alive,—all that was left, was their regiment. The old officers had inspired the young Cossacks with the love of the regiment, which was their family, their rock of refuge in the storm that raged around.

Oleg had been wounded and had got well again in a village hospital. Back at the front once more, he had been wounded a second time and brought to a hospital in Rostoff. When he was able to move about again, time was hanging heavily on his hands: cinemas, restaurants, theatres and other amusements the big town offered, held no attraction for him. All he cared for was to return to his regiment. He was scarcely there, before he was laid up with typhoid fever. Once more he recovered and took part in the retreat of the regiment to Novorossisk. His heart was heavy. Of twelve thousand men who had set out from Rostoff only three hundred embarked on black, sooty steamers for the Crimea to carry on the burden of warfare.

When the Cossacks were evacuated to the Isle of Lemnos, Oleg asked for leave to visit Mount Athos in order to worship at the shrines of the holy martyrs and receive the blessing of the Bishop Hermogenes. He spent two months at the monastery, studying the austere monastic rules. On his return, his companions noticed that he had learnt many things there.

"You ought to become a priest, Oleg Fedorovitch," they said to him.

"It may be that I will serve God some day," he answered, "but first I must do what I can for men."

Some of them tried to heckle him.

"How is it, Oleg Fedorovitch, that you took part in the war? You killed people!"

"Very likely I did."

"But the Gospel says: 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

"The Gospel does not say that. It is in the Old Testament, in the Ten Commandments of the Law of Moses. But further on it says: 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'."

"Still, Christ taught us to love those who hate us. Therefore we must also love the Bolsheviks. And you exterminated them without mercy."

"The new Testament teaches us to love our personal enemies. But Christ has repeatedly said that we must be pitiless in regard to the enemies of the Church and of mankind."

There was no wrath in his eyes as he said this. They were mild and full of love.

The officers said of him: "Once Oleg Fedorovitch finds that a certain individual must be executed he will do it without any hesitation. He will press the muzzle of a revolver to his ear and shoot him as neatly as any tchekist, and his hand will not tremble."

In Macedonia, where the Cossacks worked in the woods, Oleg Kusskoff considered no task too dangerous, and he was always first to arrive and last to leave. All the money he earned he distributed among the sick and the poor.

"It is of no use to me," he said, "I don't drink or smoke. What do I want with money?"

The Cossacks looked upon him as a saint, a man not of this world. They loved to listen to him, to talk to him of their cares and sorrows; to obtain his advice. Others called him a crank.

## IV.

THE blows of the axes were dying down, the saws stopped whining and the screeching of the cableway blocks subsided. The freshness of night was descending on the forest with its newly cut clearings. The voices of the lumbermen grew in volume as they came flocking in to the piles of logs, battens and firewood. For economy's sake, they had been working stripped naked to the waist. Tanned by the sun and weather almost to the hue of red Indians, with hair bleached and dishevelled, their young faces swarthy from starvation, hard life and exposure to the sun, they were an odd crowd to behold. Their boots, muddy with forest mould, were torn and showed their naked toes, their trousers were covered with sawdust and their unsteady walk showed that they were very tired. And yet—their voices were cheerful and echoed from the rocky mountain tops.

One of them, a tall, well-built youth of about twenty-three, with flaxen hair and light blue eyes, who had lagged behind, cried out, coming up with the rest:

"I say, boys, here we are in the month of May, and no sign of summer yet!"

He carried his axe over his shoulder, and his brawny arms and chest were still shiny with perspiration.

"It rains day in, day out," he went on, "nothing but rain and fog. And—how cold it is!"

"What else can you expect from a blessed country like this?" responded a fine fellow with black hair and a black moustache. "Mountains and forests, forests and mountains. Now, . . . our steppes. . . ."

"Our steppes!" cut in another stalwart youth whose chin and cheeks were covered with the down of a silky fair beard. "Can you mention the two in the same breath? The Don, I guess, has left its bed by now. What a sheet of water glistening in the sun! The cathedral of Tcherkassk . . . is it still standing, I wonder? You could see its cupola glittering forty miles distant."

"That is right," said a man who was walking in front. He was so thin that the vertebrae of his backbone could be easily counted. He was cold, and, holding his saw with one hand, he was trying to put on his shirt as he walked. "Just out of Rostoff, one could see it like some fire flaming in the sky."

"I remember when father used to take me in his buggy to the Cadet School in spring; on the right there was the Don shining in the sun, like a borderless sea, and on the left—the steppe. No sooner did we sight the grove of Krassnokut in the distance than the sparkling cupolas of the cathedral came into view."

"Is your father alive?" asked the man with the black moustache.

"No. Shot. In Kaledin's time, when the Bolsheviks came to Kamenskoie."

"May he rest in peace! He was an officer of the right kind," said a thickset man of middle age.

"Yes, lots have been killed off. There is scarcely anybody left," murmured the dark one.

"And why? I ask you. What have we done to them? They live. What harm is there in our being alive too? There is room for all!"

"That is freedom, that's what it is," drawled the middle-aged man. "By the bye, Seniutkin, do you happen to know what is in the papers? Is there or is there not going to be any change?"

"There you must ask Oleg Fedorovitch."

"Right. A lad after my own heart he is. Not a Cossack by birth, and yet—look what a man!"

"I have heard that his mother comes from Cossack stock."

"That's a fact. She is General Samsonoff's daughter."

"What? A daughter of our Samsonoff? The Ataman?"

"No, she hails from Siberia, the Siberian Samsonoffs come from common stock."

The lumbermen began to descend into a narrow valley, following the windings and turnings of a path which had been trodden in the mud among a jumble of stumps and boulders. The trickle of a brook was heard. It was pitch dark between the tree-clad sides of the narrow dell, and, familiar though they were

with their surroundings, they were obliged to grope their way strung out in single file. Presently some time-worn buildings came in sight, a stone wall and a chapel thrusting forth one of its corners from the thicket of the forest. The reddish gleam of a kerosene lamp shone through the windows, throwing patches of light on the things outside. It glimmered on the wet branches of a hazelbush which had just begun to cover itself with leaves, it threw a square patch of red on the sticky, black ground and lit up the unhewn stones of the wall and its seams of mortar.

The rain had stopped. It was warm in the valley and the night was calm. Stars appeared through the rifts of the scattering clouds.

"Let us make a fire and cook supper outside," said Seniutkin. "It's not likely it will rain anymore, and I am fed up with those barracks of ours and sick of everything in them. What do you say, boys?"

His suggestion met with general approval.

There was an abundance of branches and chips of wood, and a fire was soon built. A cauldron filled with water was fixed on long iron rods over the fire. The men sat down round the fire and were soon joined by others from the barracks. There were officers and Cossacks, but it was difficult to tell the one from the other. They were all tanned, with horny hands and coarsened features, and all wore the same sort of mixture of more or less tattered articles of military and civilian clothing.

"Anybody had any letters?" asked the one with the black moustache.

"There were two letters in all!"

"For whom?"

"A registered letter for Oleg Fedorovitch; the other was for Gavriloff."

"Gavriloff, is it from home?"

"Yes."

"What do they write?"

"Well," said Gavriloff rather haltingly,—"all sorts of things. It is all rather misty, and I'm sure I don't know what to make of it."

"Tell them, Pasha, what they say about the cat, it will make them laugh!"

"They pay five millions for a kitten,—they are overrun by mice."

Bending his shaggy head forward to the fire, Gavriloff rummaged with his gnarled fingers in his breast-pocket, whence he produced a leather pocket-book, evidently of his own make. He took out of it a sheet of yellowish paper and began to read:

"Our life is grey. It is spring, but it looks more like autumn, the steppe is bare and it blows from the north. Our hatas are all askew and seem to be sinking into the ground. They have not been whitewashed for a long time, and there is nobody to do it. All have gone.

"Your mother has passed away, and Olga Semenovna has gone to the commissar's as a servant. The house is empty—nobody here to work. We are infested by mice. A measly kitten costs five million

roubles not counting the tax. A pood* of coal costs sixteen million roubles, and a horse twelve milliards, but there is nothing to feed it with. I have heard that crowds of people are lying about at the railway station, dying of hunger, especially children. We are waiting for you, our bread-winners, and we don't know whether we shall keep alive until harvest time and how we shall get the harvest in. There are no workmen. But we are getting on all right. It would be sinful to complain. We have got used to things, or they have become less difficult. That is all."

"Well, what does it mean? Do they expect us?"

"They are waiting."

"And yet—it is not clear at all."

"That means, everything there is as it was before. It is still—Lenin."

"Who else—if not Lenin?"

"If it were not for Lenin things could be helped somehow!"

"Lenin knows seven languages. To the Tartar he speaks in Tartar, and to the Armenian in Armenian."

They grew silent. The branches were crackling in the fire and the water in the cauldron began to boil. From the bottom of the valley came the murmur of the brook.

"They have been writing in the papers from the east, from Astrakhan, that thousands and thousands of Cossacks were on the move!"

"From what parts?"

*36 English pounds.

"From the east. The Ural Cossacks who joined us with General Tolstoff said that masses of Cossacks were still left there."

"What has become of all our heroes? Ataman Kaledin has shot himself, Ataman Nazaroff has been shot by the Reds. But where is Dutoff? Where is Annenkoff?"

"Dutoff has been tortured to death. His Cossacks betrayed him to the Reds."

"And Annenkoff is in chains in a Chinese prison at Urumtchi."

"So far there have been no Cossack saints, but now there will be many."

"What do you say? And St. George—wasn't he a Cossack? He is always represented carrying a lance."

Again silence fell on the camp.

"It appears that in Moscow they are again eating dogs. The factories are at a standstill."

"Why are we sitting here? Why don't we move on? Nobody seems to want to help us. There was hope the Servians would do something, and here we are like a herd of cattle."

"Patience, there is a rumor we are going to be moved to the frontier. There we'll feel at home again handling rifles instead of saws."

"Lenin, Lenin,"—said one of the men with a deep sigh. "Is it possible that Lenin's power also comes from God?"

And presently, in answer, a voice was heard coming

from above, where the branches of a century-old oak tree were swaying to and fro in the fitful light of the camp-fire. The notes of the voice were clear, deep and beautiful. It was difficult to tell at once whether it was the rich contralto of a woman or a male voice that spoke.

The men all turned their heads towards the oak tree, they stood up and drew nearer in order to hear better. A whisper ran through the crowd:

"Oleg Fedorovitch has come. Oleg Fedorovitch is speaking."

## V.

"No, MY FRIENDS, Lenin's power does not come from God, he is not elected of the Lord. The dark forces which struggle against God, the forces of Satan, have sent him to destroy the orthodox faith. There was Light, and there was the great pure Word of God. And the Word was Love. When the beautiful universe was begotten in Love, the Spirit of Darkness appeared. Envy was his word, and his thoughts were full of wrath and malice. But those who fear nothing and who are firm in their faith shall conquer. The Psalmist, David, a man whose talents came from God, says:

"'. . . Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. . . .'

"Lenin came to us as 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness.' Who is he? A nobleman by birth, educated in a college and a student of the university. But he left Russia and led the life of a bookworm. He left his family and his friends and learnt to despise them and hate humanity in general. A demon took hold of him. There is no love in Lenin, naught but pride and conceit, contempt, spite and malice, indifference to the sufferings of others and cowardice. Lenin

is afraid of everything and although believing in nothing, fears death above all. He knows that eternal tortures are in store for him.

"When darkness settled in Russia, when the sun had set and our most pious Emperor had left us—when the minds of the people had grown dim and confused and men were running about like sheep in a storm, Lenin appeared from nowhere. No one knew him or had heard of him before. He is short and hideous to look at. Ugly, bald and scrubby, with crooked legs and a face covered with sweat, he seemed to bewitch everybody. He is neither clever nor talented. He is a bad orator and a still worse writer. He has no particular instruction. He was inferior to many, and was therefore acclaimed. The crowd does not care for genius. The crowd throws stones at those who are wise, executes those who are learned and crucifies saints. But it exalts nonentities, because it understands them. The crowd brought forward Kerensky, and then found a man who was meaner and viler than he was, and raised him to the skies. Lenin is not a popular hero, he is the hero of the crowd. And he will reign in Russia as long as our country continues to be—not a State—but a meeting and a crowd.

"Lenin is a demon. When the people in their madness mistook the reflection of the numerous fires that inflamed the sky, for the rays of the sun, when 'a thousand had fallen at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand.' Lenin appeared and thousands of criminals and scoundrels surrounded him and tried to

please and humor him. Listen to me, my friends! As long as we are a disorganised crowd, a herd without a shepherd, Lenin will reign over us. He is necessary to the crowd because they realize that they are better, handsomer and more talented than their master, Lenin, and this flatters them. Lenin is a scoundrel, and yet he is a king! Lenin is a thief and a bloodsucker, Lenin is a mercenary soul, who betrayed his country and sold himself to the enemy; he is now the ruler of Russia and his portraits are exhibited in every house. 'Therefore,' thinks everyone, 'I, who am better and worthier than he, I may do as I like, for, whatever I do, I shall never be able to surpass him in meanness.' Therein lies the power of the Devil and his temptation."

"When will it all come to an end?" cried someone in a voice full of despair.

"When shall we return home, Oleg Fedorovitch?"

"When? It depends on ourselves. It is time to become a people, and not a crowd. Russia is now full of legends. They say that the Czar has appeared in Siberia. He is barefooted, with a long beard, and wears the clothes of a wanderer. He is kind, merciful, yet full of authority and is recognised by the people. In far-away obscure villages, monasteries and hermitages kind people give shelter to young people whom they believe to be the children of the Czar. The Heir Apparent is supposed to be growing up in one place, saved from death by the guards; in another place, it is one of the Grand Duchesses, an angel of beauty. It

is rumored that there is news of the Czar's brother, the Grand-Duke Michail Alexandrovitch. The people are waking up. The crowd is dispersing and the exclamations of the 'orators' are replaced by the whisper of wise men.

"When you are alone at night with your thoughts, you realise that your former life was a happier one, that you were at home and free, that you knew no 'visas and obstructions'. But ever since you invented 'assemblies' and 'meetings' the noisome pestilence began. 'The will of the people—their decision is law'. And where are the people? Have you seen them? A crowd of brigands surrounding Lenin, blasphemers and debauchees, call themselves 'the people' and speak in the name of the peasants and workmen. Even here in this foreign land, don't we talk of the 'conquests of the revolution' and dream of a republic of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' . . . when our liberty is such that we live as in a prison, that we are like a herd of cattle and our brothers, the Slavs, despise us and pay us half of what they pay their own workmen?"

"You must teach us what to do, Oleg Fedorovitch."

"You must say: 'He is my refuge and my strength; my God, in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver me from the snare of the fowler, from the noisome pestilence.' There is 'noisome pestilence' everywhere: in Paris, in Belgrade, in Sofia, everywhere, where three Russians come together. This is why we are 'afraid for the terror by night, and for the arrow that flieth by

'day,' and this is why we bow to Satan although we know him to be the Devil. We have no faith."

"What is faith?" asked one of the officers.

"Faith is the confidence in truth, which needs no words. I shall say to the mountain: 'Remove hence to yonder place,' and it shall remove."

"Why does no one say it?"

"Because it is a sin to put God to a test. If I do it, it proves that I have no faith. If I have faith—I do not want any miracles."

"Why are there no miracles? They have destroyed the churches and killed the priests, and God has not punished them."

"Is that so? Is not Lenin stricken with illness, a shameful, disgusting illness? Is he not decaying alive? Is not the whole of Russia decaying under the foul breath of the Devil?"

"The commissars are gorged with everything. The young people are enjoying themselves."

"It will not last."

"Is there no way out?"

"It is time to go home. We are tired of wandering in foreign lands. Our country is fairer. The sun shines otherwise there, and the flowers smell sweeter."

"You ask me when? And I once more repeat: When you cease to be a crowd and to exalt mean and paltry people. When you get rid of the 'noisome pestilence', and say sincerely: 'Russia is Russia and it can only exist under a lawful Czar; an orthodox

Czar. And in the meanwhile, do not fear to pronounce the name which is in everybody's heart."

"Nickolai Nikolaievitch. . . ."

"When will the hour come when the tricolor flag waves in Russia, and Cossack lances glitter on the Don?"

The wood fire had burnt down. Someone brought an armful of dry twigs and branches. The fire crackled gaily and burst out into a flame which lit up the crowd.

Oleg joined the Cossacks.

"Oleg Fedorovitch, is it true that you are leaving us?"

"Yes, I have received a letter from Germany. My father is dying in Berlin. He wants to say goodbye to me."

"But you will come back?"

Oleg did not answer. He entered the circle of Cossacks and stood with his back to the fire. His greatcoat hung loosely on him like the dress of a monk.

"The potatoes are cooked. Dinner is served."

"Eh . . . if God would but help us."

"If we could open a campaign in spring."

"If he were with us—Nikolai Nikolaievitch—the commander-in-chief."

They sighed heavily. They blew on their potatoes. They burnt themselves, they ate greedily—these homeless, solitary men, stranded in a foreign land.

Oleg obtained permission from the officer in command of the regiment to leave for Germany. He distributed the money that had been sent to him among the Cossacks and prepared to start.

"How will you manage to travel without money," asked the Cossacks who were seeing him off.

"I do not need it, my friends. The name of Christ will help me. It is more powerful than any money. . . ."

"He is a queer fellow," said some of the men.

"He is a saint," thought others. "He is capable of great deeds."

The crumpled cap of Oleg Fedorovitch appeared once more at the turning of the road, and then he disappeared altogether from their view. The Cossacks began to disperse.

"Will he come back?"

"Of course he will. Oleg Fedorovitch will not forget us. The regiment means everything to him."

"Unless he wants to save his soul!"

They walked on in silence, breathing heavily as they went uphill. Seniutkin said:

"He is saved already. God has him in His keeping."

## VI.

Fedor Michailovitch Kusskoff was ill. He had tried hard to keep up. He had gone to the workshop daily, where the boxes and cigarette-cases lay piled on his table. He went on heating his glue, planing and finishing. But not for long. Soon his head began going round, and he was obliged to sit down and remain motionless, quite unable to collect his thoughts or do anything at all.

"You really ought to leave off for a while," said Shpak. But Fedor Michailovitch would rouse himself and potter wearily at his work until the luncheon interval. In the evenings he would take his boxes and cigarette-cases home with him. But, much as he tried, he could not work, and he soon had to give up the effort and lie down on his bed for hours—too tired to move. Shpak often looked in with a bun or a pot of jam sent by Verotchka; trying to cheer him up by telling him the news of the town.

"I thank you all for your kindness to me," said Fedor Michailovitch, "but I really do not want anything."

It was true enough; he could not bring himself to eat at all.

One day, as he was leaving church, Shpak happened to pronounce Kusskoff's name to somebody he was

talking to. A young woman in a black straw hat, dressed simply but with taste, came up to him. She had brown eyes, a fresh, round face and full lips—she looked so typically Russian that nobody would have ever mistaken her for anything else.

"I heard you mention the name of Kusskoff. Which Kusskoff were you talking about?"

"General Fedor Michailovitch Kusskoff."

"The Bolshevik?"

"Yes, if you like. He served in the Red Army for some time, but I met him as a simple lieutenant in the Northwestern Volunteer Army where I too had the honor of serving."

"Is he here, in Berlin? Have you had any news of his sons?"

"None whatever. Neither has he."

"His eldest son, Sviatoslav, committed suicide in Paris."

She was already turning away from him when Shpak said:

"He is ill and destitute; he is dying."

She stopped.

"Where does he live?"

"In Hallensee."

"Do you know his address?"

"Yes."

"Let me have it. I'll go to him at once. I knew his second son, Igor, and I should like to do what I can for Igor's father. Unfortunately, that won't be much. I have scarcely anything myself."

"I beg your pardon," said Shpak, "but I do not know who you are."

"Of course. I quite forgot. Nowadays one must be careful about these matters. I am Sister Serebrennikova, Sofia Nikolaevna. Our priest, Father Tikhon, will tell you all you want to know about me."

"You need not worry, captain," said an old gentleman in whose company Sister Serebrennikova had been when she had first addressed Shpak, "your Kusskoff has found a treasure. If he has been ill, he is ill no more. Our Sofia Nikolaevna revives the dead and cures those who are ailing."

"I wish you would not talk like that. It is sinful, it is sacrilege," said Sofia Nikolaevna. "Everybody must help to the best of his ability. Let us go, captain. You see I do not even ask who you are."

Shpak winced under this rebuke.

"I am sorry," he said, "but, you see, all the Russians in Berlin seem to know me. I am Evgueni Pavlovitch Shpak, artisan at Frau Saenger's workshop."

"That is quite all right, Evgueni Pavlovitch, let us be off."

Shpak found Fedor Michailovitch lying dressed on his bed. When he said he had come with a lady, the sick man began to fidget about. He got up from his bed and began smoothing down his straggly grey hair.

"A lady? Why? What lady? I don't know anybody."

The images of the women who had been near to him in life, passed before his mental eye.

Natasha had been tortured to death, his sister Lipotchka had been killed. Could it be Aglaia, his brother's widow?

"Do I know her?" he asked. "It is dark here. It is not nice. Hadn't we better go out and sit on the seat where the tramcars stop?"

But it was too late. The door opened, and Sister Serebrennikova came in.

"Good morning," she said, holding out her plump, white hand. "I heard you were not well and had nobody to look after you, so I have come to look you up. I used to know your son Igrunka of the Tchernobylsky Hussars; we were great friends."

Shpak quietly left the room. Sister Serebrennikova went up to the window and sat down on a chair. For a few minutes neither of them spoke. Fedor Michailovitch had remained standing at the door. He also sat down.

"You are ill?" asked Sister Serebrennikova in her soft voice. "Have you seen a doctor?"

"My case is hardly one for a doctor," said Fedor Michailovitch in a scarcely audible voice.

"I understand," said the nurse.

The silence grew tense. The little light that found its way through the window left the greatest part of the room and its furniture in darkness. The cobbler was not in, and from the next room, his workshop, came the ticking of a clock.

"I suppose you know what our Russians are. The common people, I mean," said the nurse in a quiet voice.

"I hope I do," answered Fedor Michailovitch in the same way.

"It was in 1915. We had beaten off the Germans and taken the offensive . . . on the Bzura. . . . Our lines had moved on, the guns were following. I had gone out with the stretcher-bearers to look for those of the wounded who could not move. Those who had been lightly wounded were coming in unaided, or supporting each other, to the field-ambulances. Among the latter I noticed two of our men, evidently wounded themselves, who were carrying a third man. I went up to to them, and I saw that the man they were carrying was a big German. Our men had both been wounded in their legs, seriously enough to make them lose blood profusely at every step they took. I stopped.

" 'What are you doing there?' I asked.

" 'He has got it badly; he can't get on by himself—so we carry him.'

" 'And yourselves?'

" 'Nitchevo,' they said, 'God has been merciful to us,—only flesh-wounds. It hurts a little, and that is all.'

" 'But isn't he your enemy?'

" 'Not much of an enemy now. All the three of us are wounded. It hurts him as much as it hurts us.' "

"Believe me, General," went on Sofia Nikolaevna,

"only common Russian people are true Christians. Not us. Not the 'intelligentzia'. Peasants, soldiers, workmen, Cossacks, sailors—only they reach the solitary heights of self-sacrifice for their neighbor's sake. For Christ's sake."

"How do you account then, Sister, for all that is going on now? For all the pogroms, acts of savagery, wilful profanation of the church? It is all their work, the work of the peasants, soldiers, sailors, Cossacks. I know it. There are no brutes worse than they are. I have seen it all with my own eyes!" cried Fedor Michailovitch, trembling with emotion.

"And yet, there are no more saintly beings than they are."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"They are 'these little ones'. They, too, like children, do not realize what they are doing. Children tear off the wings of butterflies and beetles, they are cruel to animals, they mock at religious rites, because they do not understand. Remember the words of Christ: 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' They will not be punished for what they are doing, but those who have tempted them will not escape punishment."

"In the next world?"

"No, here on earth. Christ will not forgive them."

She had stopped talking. Time dragged wearily on to the measured strokes of the pendulum. As though

petrified with terror, Fedor Michailovitch was standing at the door. It seemed to him that the very substance of life was trickling away from him drop by drop with every tick of the clock.

"Tick-tock," he believed the clock was saying, "you have either acted like these little ones, or you . . . tick-tock . . . or you have not done your duty. . . . Tick-tock . . . your duty . . . tick-tock . . . your sovereign . . . tick-tock . . . your country . . . tick-tock . . . what has become of them all?"

And the silence was more terrible than the most terrible of words.

There could be no forgiveness for him, because there was no possible vindication of his acts. All he could plead for was mercy.

## VII.

Sister Serebrennikova had roused everybody in Fedor Michailovitch's behalf; she had applied to the Red Cross, to the sisterhood of St. Olga, to private charity, to the Officers' Union. The result had been that Fedor Michailovitch was enabled to exist without being obliged to work. It had even been decided to send him to a watering-place for the summer. His second son, Igrunka, being in America, Oleg, his youngest son, had been traced to Serbia. All the necessary visas had been obtained and sent to him with funds for travelling expenses and a summons urging him to come to his father's bed-side without delay.

At noon, Sofia Ivanovna would look in, or Verotchka, bringing an egg, or some broth, or some other titbits. In the evenings, too, one or the other of the Dekanoffs, or Sofia Ivanovna, would come and read to him. But all was of no avail. His vitality was steadily ebbing away from his apparently healthy frame. It was evident to everybody that he was sinking fast, and the German doctor who attended him was at a loss to account for his physical decline.

"Over-anxiety," he said. "A worried state of the

mind—it is a nervous disease, a malady specifically Russian."

A spring storm was gathering over Berlin. Shaggy clouds reared their black masses on the grey background of the sky; they mingled with the smoke of the railway-engines and the soot of the factory stacks, they seemed to press heavily on the very roofs of the houses, they spread all over the tracks of the elevated railway and blotted out the view of avenues and streets. The close air was laden with the smell of the fishmongers' and butchers' shops. The tradespeople in the open markets hurriedly folded up their tents and cleared away what remained unsold of their wares. Below, the air was still calm. The asphalt of the pavements had become viscous from the heat, and it was difficult to breathe. But higher up, the wind had already begun chasing and worrying the clouds. Pent up under that lowering canopy, the medley of sound produced by the motors and tramcars with their hooters and bells, by the rattling wheels of heavy wagons and by the humming wires, grew more intense, and the smell of paraffin oil and petrol became more offensive. The fragrance of the fresh foliage of the vast Tiergarten was powerless to subdue the evil breath of the bustling streets. The stifling heat was everywhere—in flats, in shops, in offices. All Berlin was longing for the storm to break and bring relief. At

the cobbler's flat, one could scarcely breathe. Although the windows were open, the smell of boot-leather, stale glue and sodden potatoes and gas, did not leave the rooms. The back-yard was black, and in the rooms it was so dark that the cobbler had been obliged to switch on the electric light.

There was scarcely any light or air in Fedor Michailovitch's room, and it was so narrow that it resembled a tomb.

Fedor Michailovitch was in bed. By his pillow sat his son Oleg, who had arrived from Serbia late at night, and early next morning had sought out his father. Now, for over three hours, Fedor Michailovitch had been talking, telling his son about everything that had happened after he had left home, and explaining the circumstances and reasons which had made him serve in the Red Army.

Several times he had been obliged to interrupt his narrative and rest.

"Well," said Fedor Michailovitch at last, "now you know everything."

"Yes, father," said Oleg, bowing his head.

Fedor Michailovitch lifted his hand with a feeble gesture as though wishing to hold it out to his son.

Oleg did not move.

"Do you understand?"

Oleg did not reply.

There was a flash of lightning followed by a peal of thunder. The light in the next room went out and the cobbler left his workshop, slamming the door.

Father and son were left alone in the flat. In the room it was so dark that Fedor Michailovitch could not see his son's face.

"Do you understand?" he whispered.

"Yes, father."

Silence fell in the room once more. A gust of wind rattled the window panes, but did not find its way inside. Flash followed flash, and the peals of thunder shook the air, sometimes near and deafening, sometimes dying away with a distant rumbling. Fedor Michailovitch dreaded to know the reason of his son's silence. His heart contracted with pain. His sight began to fail. He closed his eyes, and sighed deeply. He looked up once more. Oleg was sitting motionless, his figure dimly outlined against the greyish background of the window, and Fedor Michailovitch had the sensation of seeing a spectre sitting at his bed-side.

"Oleg,—do you forgive?"

Sitting up painfully, Fedor Michailovitch leaned forward and searched his son's face, as though expecting to read an answer there. The thunder distracted him. The flashes of lightning made Oleg appear a different being. It seemed his face had assumed the features of Varvara Sergueievna, his grandmother, and Fedor Michailovitch fancied that he saw his mother come to sit in judgment over her son.

In vain he strove to plead his cause; his strength failed him, but all his thoughts centered upon his mother in mute appeal. In his son's reply he knew he was to hear his mother passing sentence. Ex-

hausted, he sank back on his pillows. One could not hear him breathe. His eyes were closed,—he listened for his son to speak. Before his mind's eye passed one by one all those who had found their doom because of him. His nephew Tom, the old couple at whose house Tom had been living, Lipotchka, Lena, Benedict Benedictovitch, Terekhoff, Blagoveshtchensky, and, finally, Natasha herself.

He could not exculpate himself, and yet,—helpless and hopeless—he still waited for the words: "Not guilty!"

Oleg rose from his seat and went up to the window. All his figure was now plainly revealed to view.

At last he spoke. In a low voice he said:

"Men and God will forgive you. You have not been a tempter,—you are a victim."

The storm broke. In a steady downpour the rain began to fall. In its wake came the fragrance of the open fields and distant forests. It beat its merry tattoo on roofs and window-sills, and the water rushed down the spouts, splashing into the yard below.

"I have been thinking much about the tempters, father,—about the executioners. They shall not escape punishment either in this world or in the next!"

"It won't be me who will punish them, Oleg," whispered Fedor Michailovitch. "Look what has become of me with all this brooding and worrying. It has killed me. I am dying."

Oleg raised his head. More than ever he resembled

his grandmother, Varvara Sergueievna. He looked his father straight in the eyes and said in a firm voice:

"I shall avenge you, father."

"You, Oleg? A saintly man like you? How could you do it?"

And, falling almost below a whisper, the voice of the dying man breathed:

"You will have to take life."

Silence hung heavily in the room. Life was leaving Fedor Michailovitch. He was clinging to it with despair. His hands were groping on the counterpane. He was afraid death would overtake Oleg's reply. He clearly saw that only through his son could he atone for his crime.

The thunder was dying away towards the east. The drumming of the rain still continued, but it was growing lighter, and the sun was about to break through the clouds.

Oleg was standing at the window, erect and beautiful with the health of youth.

"I know! I shall kill! Rest in peace!" he said in a firm voice.

He knelt down by his father's bed, took his hand and kissed it. Holding it in his own hand, he felt it growing cold.

* * * * * *

The red flag was still flying over prostrate Russia. But a mute spirit of vengeance had already begun

to grow in the hearts of her people—the vengeance of children for their fathers, of sons for their mother-country, the vengeance of the faithful for their desecrated church,—of man for outraged humanity.

Nemesis, the sagacious, Nemesis, the undying, was beating her wings over Russia, and the hearts of her people felt how every hour was bringing nearer that vengeance which is supreme above any vengeance of man, . . . the Vengeance of God.

THE END

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